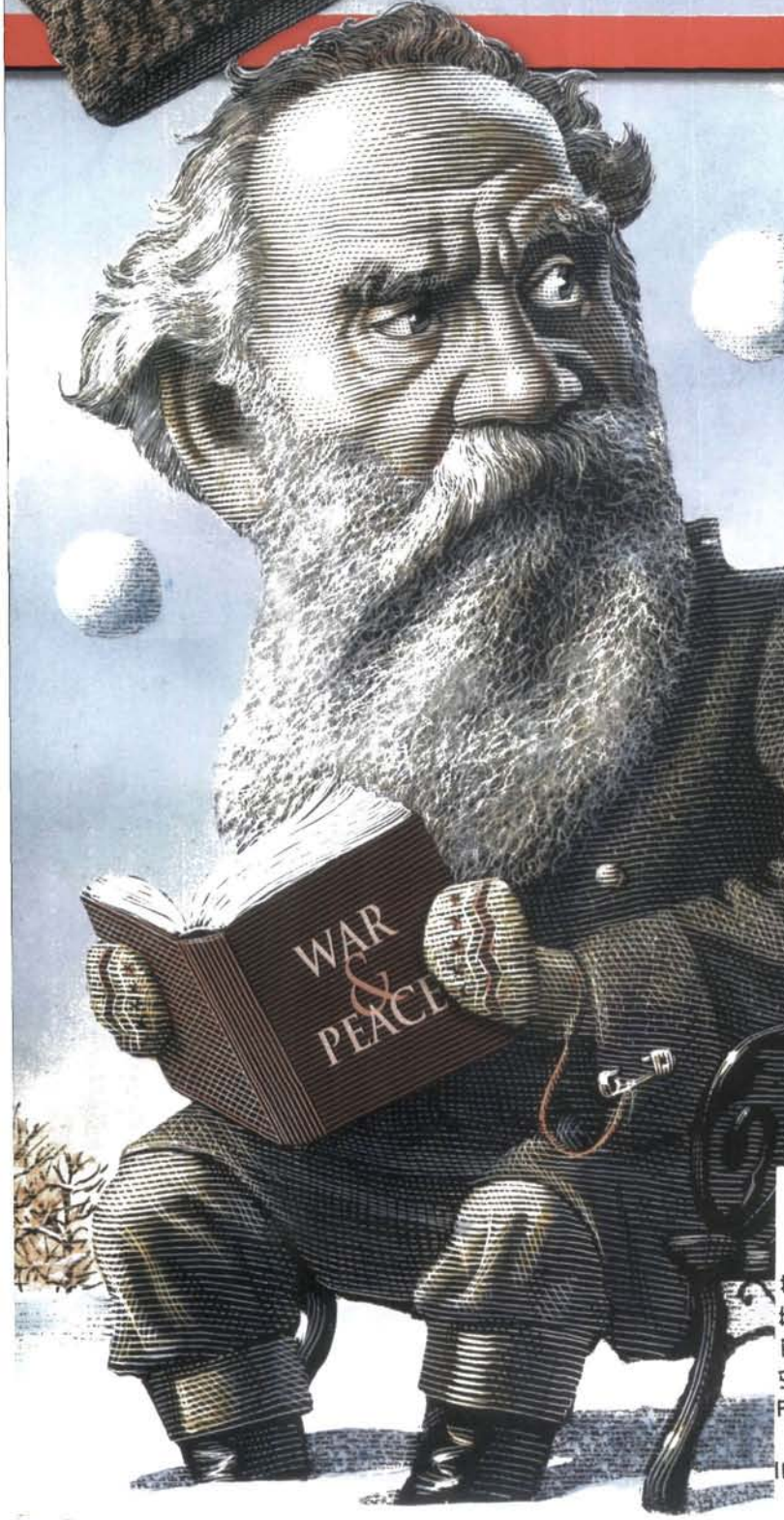
the weekly standard

DECEMBER 6, 2004 • $3.95

CLINTONFEST IN ARKANSAS
MATT LABASH

Holiday Reading

Joseph Epstein on Truman Capote
Judith Gelernter on Teachout's Balanchine
Glenn Reynolds on Neal Stephenson
Meyrav Wurmser on Natan Sharansky
Susie Currie on Mary Eberstadt
Robert Finch on John James Audubon



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the weekly Standard

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Something Resembling News from Canada!

Somebody named Carolyn Parrish, a member of parliament from someplace called Mississauga-Erindale, was expelled from Canada's governing Liberal party on November 18 by that country's prime minister, who is somebody named Paul Martin. Ms. Parrish's fate appears to have been sealed when the news division of an outfit called the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation aired a five-second video clip that showed her gleefully grinding her leather boot onto a "George Bush action figure." But Prime Minister Martin's aides insist that Parrish's own taste of the boot was actually the result of long-accumulating Liberal party frustration over her outlandish behavior. Word is, for example, that Parrish last year created another such stir up north with remarks about "damn Americans"—and how "I hate those bastards."

Not everyone in Canada is happy with the way Bush-stomp-gate has played out, of course. Somebody named Michael Donovan, for instance—the CBC producer of a satirical news program for which the Parrish video was originally filmed—complains to the *New York Times* that public criticism of his "tame" little comedy "sketch" suggests that "Canadians have lost their famous sense of humor."

Famous?

The banished Ms. Parrish, however, claims to feel "50 pounds lighter and 10 years younger" in consequence of her new status as an involuntarily independent MP. She promises to continue serving her constituents, just as before. And she also promises to restrain herself should the real-life President Bush happen by the House of Commons during his two-day visit this week to Canada's capital, a city called Ottawa. According to a newspaper called the *Toronto Star*, there'd earlier been some nervousness about the possibility that Parrish might go ahead and boo the president—much the way "MP Svend Robinson famously heckled then-U.S. president Ronald Reagan in 1987."

Famously? ♦

Stupid Is As Stupid Does

Political cartoonist and columnist Ted Rall has had a bad November. On November 4, his syndicate sent out a four-panel comic strip depicting Republican-dominated American politics as a "classroom in which mentally handicapped children are mainstreamed"—complete with mocking pictures of drooling special-needs students. Many parents of real-life special-needs students took notice. And the *Washington Post*, deciding that Rall's work "just did not fit the tone we wanted," dropped him from its website (much as the *New York Times* had done back in March).

Then there was Rall's November 9 column about the presidential election returns, "Confessions of a Cultural Elitist: Win or Lose, Kerry Voters are Smarter than Bush Voters," in which our hero further cultivated what appears to be his peculiar obsession with IQ demographics. "The biggest red-blue divide is intellectual," Rall announced. "By any objective standard, you had to be spectacularly stupid to support Bush." So Kerry supporters "on the coasts," while disappointed, should remember to "feel superior," he advised. After all, "we eat better, travel more, dress better, watch cooler movies, earn better salaries, meet more interesting people, listen to better music, and know more about what's going on in the world."

To which THE SCRAPBOOK might add: One particular Kerry supporter also seems to have *much* bigger and more complicated status anxieties than the rest of us do. And he seems embarrassingly powerless to shut up about them—even while other people, cognitively advanced blue-state types included, are all but laughing in his face.

How else to explain Ted Rall's astonishing, *auto-da-fé* performance on Min-

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nesota Public Radio's *Weekend America* program on November 20? Co-host Barbara Bogaev had invited him on to defend "what some might say" was the "smug elitism" of his published "rant" about the cerebral inferiority of Bush voters. Bogaev's other guest, Democratic media consultant Hank Sheinkopf, had raised an obvious objection: "You can't tell people they're stupid and their faith doesn't matter and then expect them to vote for Democrats." So what did Rall have to say for himself?

Rall, unrepentant, said this:

> I do think that it's important for the intellectual elite to be proud of what we do. Those of us who are in the punditry class, those of us who live in the big coastal cities, we do have access to better information than people in the Midwest. If you read the *Toledo Blade*, you don't get as much high-quality information as you do if you read the *New York Times*. But I do think Hank is absolutely right when you talk about the need to, obviously, to communicate with people. The way that that's going to happen is to stop overintellectualizing issues, and to tap into the sort of hot-button emotional responses that were so successful for liberals through the '60s and '70s. And then somehow we started becoming all intellectual and arguing facts and, you know, facts don't really work with the electorate because unfortunately, let's face it, the electorate is mostly stupid.

Besides, Rall explained to a plainly incredulous Barbara Bogaev:

> Isn't it kind of intellectually dishonest on the part of Democrats, especially people who are well informed and who are journalists, to try to pretend that they know less than they do? People who are busy working 52 hours a week don't really have the time to watch CNN and MSNBC and Fox News every day all day long like I do. They're not reading *Libération* or *Le Monde* like I do.

The blinkered ignorance of common folk poses a "terrible conundrum," Monsieur Rall admits. "I'm not comfortable with the fact that someone who doesn't know who the vice president is has the same vote that I do." But he isn't quite prepared to "take it away from them, either."

So what to do? Rall recommends that Mensacrats ignore the hicks and yabbos and set out, instead, on yet another expeditionary search for the Lost Tribe of Howard Dean. And he just *knows* they're out there: "We still have a lot of people who didn't show up to vote on Election Day who are registered Democrats," Rall insists.

Hank Sheinkopf, by contrast, thinks his party would be better off simply praying for rain. "In order for Democrats to thrive again," he sighs, "unfortunately we're gonna need some economic problems that are more severe, and we're gonna need a belief that people have to be protected, that market forces are not sufficient. And a couple of good downturns in the economy in the Midwest would be a lot helpful." ♦

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Casual

Lock and Load

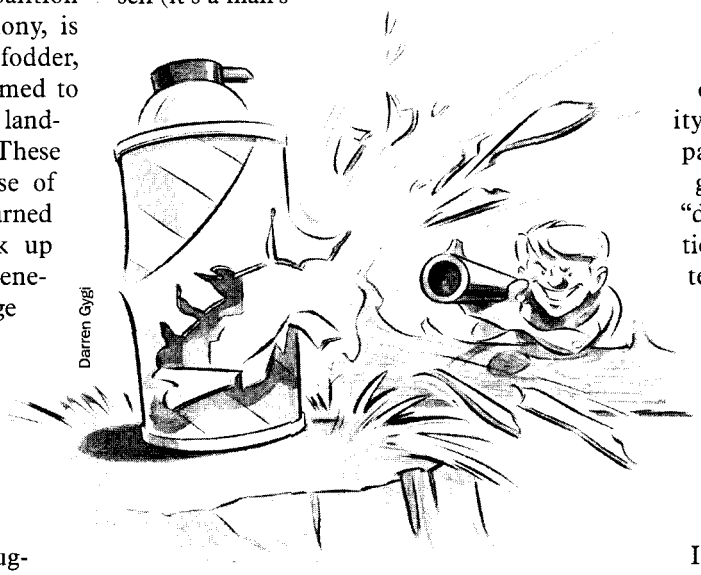
I'm a pretty good shot, but I can only go at it for so many hours before my eyes start to water and my hands begin to shake. Say I get up around noon. By dinner time I'm pretty wasted, the only consolation being that by then I've racked up an impressive body count. Alternating between a shotgun and a plasma rifle, I'm an army of one.

The Covenant, an alien coalition bent on intergalactic hegemony, is mostly reduced to cannon fodder, now that I've grown accustomed to stalking my prey in the virtual landscapes of video-planet Halo. These days, I'm making skilled use of active camouflage, and I've learned to bide my time and sneak up silently on my unsuspecting enemy before unleashing a barrage of fire that makes me giddy and makes him dead.

The fact is, I've always enjoyed shooting things. As a child I spent many summer afternoons firing .22 caliber bullets at enemy cans of shaving cream and bug-repellent, anything that offered the chance for a secondary explosion. Even now, though many years have passed, I can't resist a moving target.

Recently I thought I'd glimpsed Valhalla in a paintball match between allied and opposing junior journalists. We annihilated our adversaries time and again, only to see them rise from the dead and present themselves once more as willing targets; and when it was done, there were sandwiches and cold beer for victor and vanquished alike. But triumph is fleeting, and live targets are few. Mostly, I've had to dedicate myself to the destruction of Halo. It turns out I'm not the only one.

The other week saw the release of *Halo 2*, an event unprecedented in video-gaming history if measured by either sales or media attention. It seems that gamers are now so numerous, and of such advanced age, that our news warrants front-page coverage. The *Washington Post* ran a long story about the release, and didn't bury it in the tech section. Among the revelations: The average gamer is 29 years old, and may well consider himself (it's a man's world) part of the "Atari generation."


Darren Gygi

The *Post*'s story, and gamers themselves, liken the hyping of *Halo* to the Hollywood blockbuster—to *The Incredibles* and *Harry Potter*. But some of the coverage, I'd have to say, is misleading. The *Post*'s nod to "stunning, colorful, cinematic visuals" might leave readers supposing that it's the wonders of cinematography that keep their loved ones up playing video games all night. But of course it's not. It's our bloodlust.

The gamer demographic doesn't need to hunt for food, and many, I suspect, are living under circumstances similar to my own—in a house where gunplay is not tolerated. I haven't even seen my pellet gun since I last fired it indoors, prompting its immediate confiscation by the authorities (the fair sex can be so unfair). The Second Amendment providing no protection from tyranny in the home, I and others like me have had no choice but to commit ourselves to the virtual Third Way.

By now I have my own *Halo 2*, and I've probably spent 24 hours playing it over the last two weeks. This time I suspect I'm on the cusp of victory in my long campaign to extirpate the Covenant. But the conquest has not been without cost. I've neglected both personal and professional duties in its pursuit. And I've been getting some unflattering feedback from certain quarters.

My girlfriend is not amused by what she calls my immature affinity for firearms. And my parents can't seem to let go of this thing about "deadlines" and applications to "law school." The term "perpetual adolescent" was flung at me in one unpleasant exchange, along with the suggestion that I should read an article by that name in my own magazine.

Being a reasonable guy, I did as I was asked. I looked up the article, braced for a cold bath of reproach. I needn't have worried.

The author, a Mr. Epstein, wrote, "For the perpetual adolescent, time is almost endlessly expandable"—my sentiment exactly. And then he asked a very good question: "Why not go to law school in one's late thirties, or take the pre-med requirements in one's early forties, or wait even later than that to have children?"

Why not indeed? If the perspicacious Mr. Epstein is correct, my best years of youthful irresponsibility are still ahead of me, and my chances of triumphing over the extraterrestrials are excellent.

Michael Goldfarb

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Correspondence

Semper Fi

I just wanted to thank you once again for all of the issues of your magazine that you send our battalion here in Iraq. It is a great thing to be able to read your publication here when otherwise we would have very little news from the outside world. Thank you!

Semper Fi.

1st Lt. James Crabtree
Iraq

P.S. You can still see updates I write on our unit at *www.politics1.com*.

Editor's Note: Lt. Crabtree's message, written on a cardboard postcard, is reproduced below.

Big Man On Campus

I have always liked Tom Wolfe and his books, but I do understand Joseph Bottum's critique ("School Days," Nov. 22). Wolfe doesn't make his social commentary and plot cohere. I think his best book, which Bottum did not mention, is *The Right Stuff*, a wonderful portrait of the early years of NASA. And in spite of Wolfe's shortcomings, he hasn't sold his soul to the literary establishment. I look forward to reading his newest novel.

Chris Currie
Calypso, NC

Competence Man

I enjoyed Joseph Epstein's article on George W. Bush's alleged hardware-store management ineptitude ("Sublime Competence," Nov. 22). Growing up in Arkansas (a "red" state), I remember going to our local hardware store. It was run by someone that author Philip Roth would no doubt have considered a stupid, red-necked, backwater, mouth-breathing hillbilly. His name was Sam Walton, the founder of Walmart.

Stephen T. Gerdel
Washington, MO

Bush vs. Europe

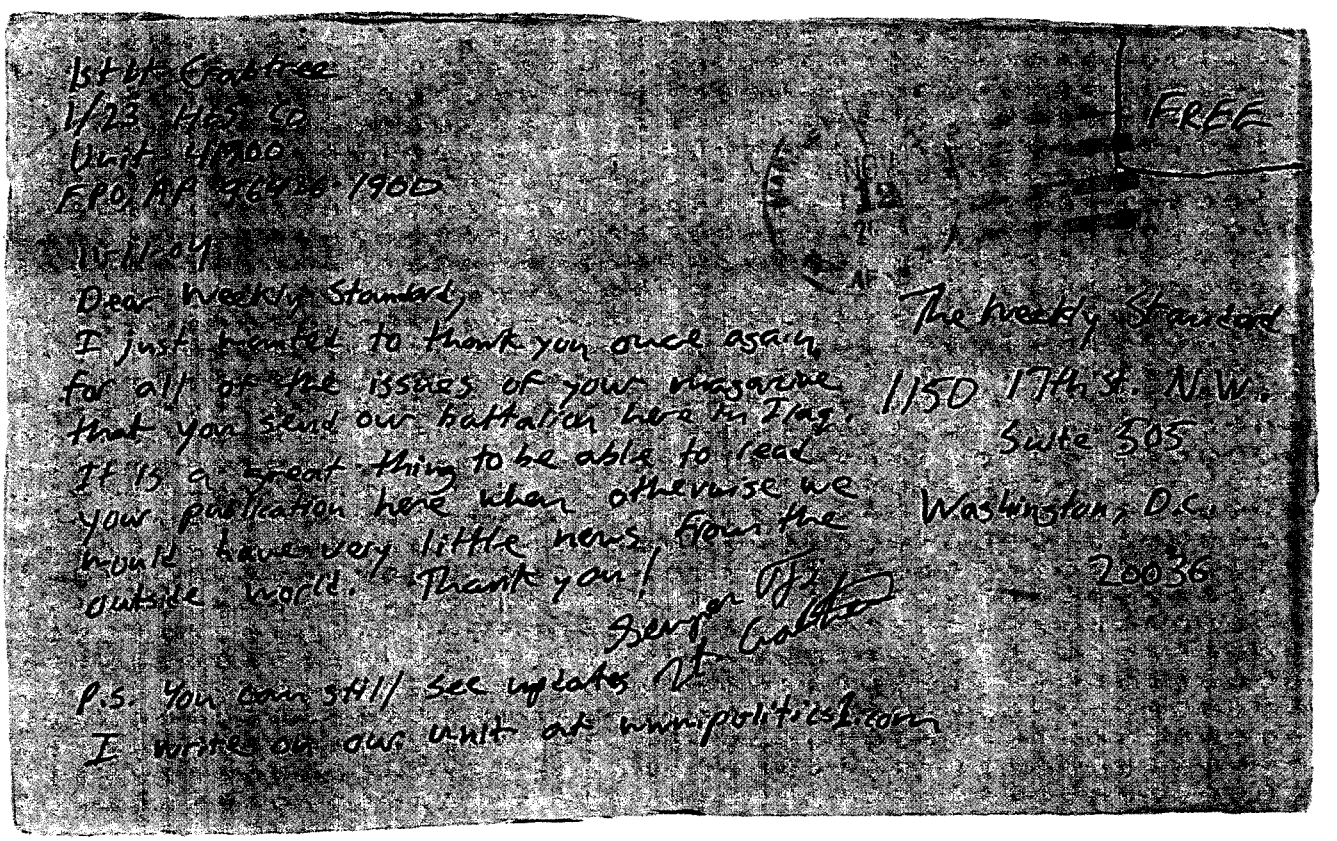
Irwin M. Stelzer hits the nail on the head in "An Alliance of Two" (Nov. 22). He clearly outlines the sentiments of many European leaders—and also hints at the possibility of a European alliance without the United States. Tony Blair was correct to point out that these statesmen must begin "a sensible debate about why people in America feel as they do."

But that debate is going in the wrong direction. I am just disgusted to hear again and again what Jacques Chirac said about Arafat and what José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero said about President Bush, not to mention Herr Schröder's anti-Americanism. The comments of each leader could not be any clearer.

A Europe united against the United States may be a reality. But I believe, possibly naively, that there are Europeans who disagree with their leaders.

It is about time that they stand up.

Laura Troidle
Branford, CT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Semper Fi
1st Lt Crabtree

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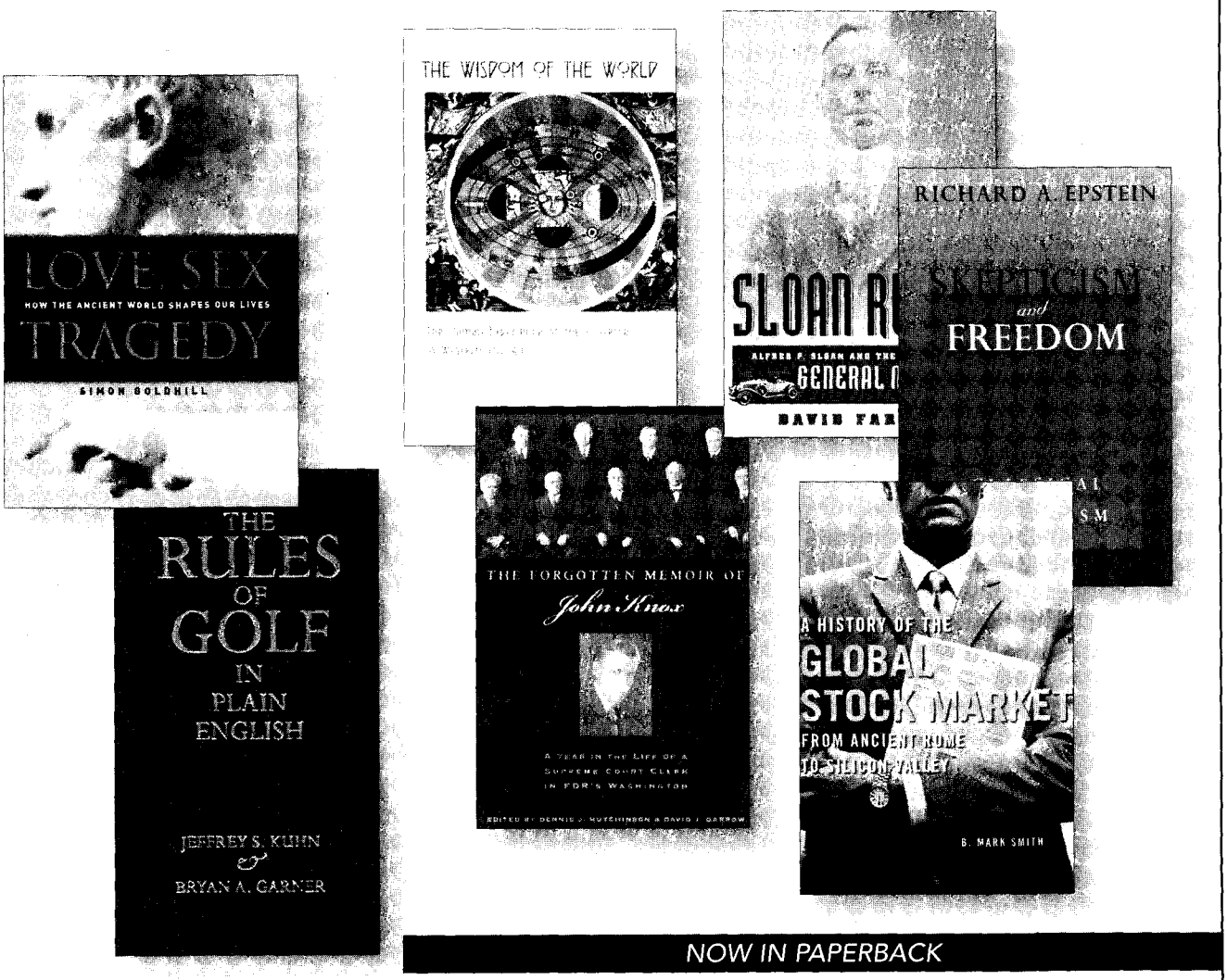

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Regime Change at the CIA

Porter Goss was confirmed as director of central intelligence on September 22, 2004. That day, acting CIA director John McLaughlin said, "I know I speak for my colleagues at CIA and throughout the intelligence community in congratulating Porter Goss on his confirmation by the Senate as director of central intelligence."

It was a gracious statement from a man who had wanted the job. But in terms of accuracy it should go down as the latest in a long line of bogus CIA assessments. McLaughlin was not speaking on behalf of many of his colleagues at the CIA when he congratulated Goss on his confirmation.

As chairman of the House Select Committee on Intelligence for seven years, Goss had been highly critical of the agency, particularly its clandestine services. He arrived at Langley with reform of the stubborn CIA bureaucracy on his mind.

So within two weeks of McLaughlin's statement, current and former CIA officials started firing warning shots at their new boss. These ranged from disgraceful attempts to tarnish the personal reputation of Goss's associates, to silly stories of how Goss's team was being rude to oh-so-sensitive bureaucrats in Langley, to ridiculous claims that Goss was trying to politicize an agency that had become more politicized than either of our political parties.

These stories were fed to sympathetic and credulous reporters by operatives long schooled in the art of disinformation, and the media began to construct a narrative: Porter Goss and his heavy-handed band of Republicans had unfortunately come to carry out a partisan purge of an outstanding, effective, public-spirited agency.

Meanwhile, it turned out that Michael Scheuer, former head of the agency's bin Laden unit, had received permission from CIA leadership publicly (though anonymously) to criticize the Bush administration's conduct of the war on terror through much of the last year—so long as that critique did not include harsh assessments of the performance of the intelligence community. That admission makes it much easier to understand the numerous CIA leaks against President Bush in September and October.

The good news is that the president is now fighting back. He wants change at the agency and is standing behind Goss. He knows that he cannot carry out a post-9/11 foreign policy with a pre-9/11 intelligence apparatus—and whatever constrained him from making changes over the past three years, those constraints seem gone. He knows the CIA needs dramatic reform, that the American people will welcome such reform, and even that they expect him to do it and to do it quickly. And he knows that those inside the CIA opposed to Goss's reforms will fight hard and will fight dirty.

So Bush and Goss are undeterred. When two senior CIA officials from the operations directorate challenged his authority earlier this month, Goss quickly made it clear that he would accept their resignations. They resigned. These are almost certainly the first of many personnel changes. Others will and should come quickly. And organizational changes will follow as well. There is much to do. Bush made clear he appreciates the urgency of the task with his November 18 order instructing Goss to vastly increase the size of the clandestine and analysis services at the agency "as soon as feasible."

But the improvements at the CIA must be both quantitative and qualitative. The CIA, and in particular its clandestine service, exists to penetrate enemies and collect their secrets. In recent years, it has signally failed in this task. The CIA never penetrated Saddam Hussein's inner circle or the senior levels of al Qaeda. Thus, analysts were clueless about much that was going on within al Qaeda and within Saddam Hussein's regime.

Porter Goss, with the strong backing of the president, should insist on major reform at the CIA. The more quickly he proceeds, and the more steadfastly the president backs him, the safer we'll all be.

—*William Kristol*

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Two, Three, Many Fallujas

The allies are uprooting insurgents throughout Iraq. BY MACKUBIN THOMAS OWENS

THE TAKEDOWN of terrorists in Falluja seems to have gone well. The terrorists, as expected, fought hard and mostly to the death, but U.S. and Iraqi casualties remain lower than the history of urban warfare would have led us to expect. Success in Falluja can be attributed to two factors: a well-conceived plan and the outstanding execution of that plan by Marines and soldiers on the ground.

But the second-guessing has already begun. Critics are asking what the operation in Falluja really accomplished. They note that the insurgents' leaders appear to have escaped and that violence has erupted elsewhere in northern Iraq. Media accounts also routinely describe the fighting outside Falluja as a "rebel counteroffensive" that surprised the U.S. military, implying that the reduction of Falluja merely created *more* insurgents.

But the view conveyed by these headlines is myopic. An equivalent headline in June 1944 would have read: "Massive U.S. Casualties on Omaha Beach; Hitler's Reich Remains Intact, Defiant." Such stories fail to place Falluja, Mosul, Tal Afar, and other cities in northern Iraq in context. The fact is that Falluja is part of a *campaign*, a series of coordinated events—movements, battles, and supporting operations—designed to achieve strategic or operational objectives within a military theater. Falluja is just one battle, albeit an extremely important one, in a comprehensive campaign to stabilize the Sunni Triangle.

The key to a successful campaign is the proper sequencing of events. That sequencing depends on circumstances, which are always changing. A campaign begins with a plan, of course, but no plan can be locked in concrete. It was Helmuth von Moltke, chief of the Prussian general staff during the wars of German unification, who observed that "no plan of operation extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force. Only the layman thinks that he can see in the course of the campaign the consequent execution of the original idea with all the details thought out in advance and adhered to until the very end."

The second-guessing has already begun. Critics are asking what the operation in Falluja really accomplished.

The commander, wrote Moltke, must keep his objective in mind, "undisturbed by the vicissitudes of events. . . . But the path on which he hopes to reach it can never be firmly established in advance. Throughout the campaign he must make a series of decisions on the basis of situations that cannot be foreseen. The successive acts of war are thus not premeditated designs, but on the contrary are spontaneous acts guided by military measures. Everything depends on penetrating the uncertainty of veiled situations to evaluate the facts, to clarify the unknown, to make decisions rapidly, and then to carry them out with strength and constancy."

In other words, able commanders choose between alternative courses of action depending on the circumstances. If my fleet has been driven from the western Pacific and I want to be in position to bring sustained force against the Japanese home islands, what steps do I have to take? If I want to defeat Germany and I am now at Normandy, what is the best course of action? If my goal is to create the military and political conditions for a more liberal Iraq, what sequence of events leads to this outcome?

When they controlled Falluja, the rebels were able to sustain a high rate of attack against the Iraqi government and coalition forces. Falluja gave them infrastructure—human and physical—and provided the security needed to maintain a large terrorist network. As one military analyst, writing for the Belmont Club blog, has remarked, in the absence of sanctuary, large terrorist organizations cannot survive. Without sanctuary, terrorist networks are reduced to "small, clandestine hunted bands."

Thus, the key to success in the Sunni Triangle is the destruction of the enemy infrastructure. The discoveries by American troops of car-bomb factories and vast stockpiles of arms and explosives indicate that Falluja was the keystone of this infrastructure. It is true that many rebels, including the ringleader, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, escaped from Falluja. It is also true that violence has erupted in Mosul, Ramadi, and other cities of this area. But without a secure base in Falluja, the effectiveness of Zarqawi's operation is likely to decline.

Here's what a senior U.S. diplomat recently told the *Seattle Times*: "There will be horrific events outside Falluja. . . . I would never tell you that violence in Sunni areas won't get worse when you open up a battle." That period, he added, is not expected to last long. "You will have a shortish period when everybody will say the whole country's falling apart but they

Mackubin Thomas Owens is professor of national security at the Naval War College.

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[the insurgents] will not be able to maintain that tempo." In other words, the rebels can attack on a broad front for a while, but they will not be able to keep it up for long. What is going on in the Sunni Triangle is not so much a "rebel counteroffensive" as it is the last desperate gasp of a group running out of time and space.

The coalition must now go after the rest of the rebel infrastructure, which consists of a series of towns that coincide with two infiltration routes: The first runs from the Syrian border to the Euphrates, and then on to Baghdad and Falluja; the second, from Iran and Kurdistan along the Tigris.

All wars hinge on logistics. No force, conventional or guerrilla, can continue to fight if it is not resupplied. Storming Falluja was absolutely essential to the destruction of the rebel logistics infrastructure. The city was the terminus of what the Belmont Club calls "the conveyor belt of destruction that flow[s] from the Syrian border toward Baghdad." Just as the capture of Caen and St. Lô by the Allies in 1944 was a necessary prelude to the breakout from the *bocage* and the use of Cherbourg and Le Havre to support the drive across France, so the takedown of Falluja is necessary to the security of Baghdad.

The rebels can expect no respite. American, British, and Iraqi forces will maintain a high operational tempo to prevent them from regrouping in the cities along their lines of communications and supply. If logistics are the sinews of war, we can expect that the next steps in the campaign will involve further interdiction of the rebels' lines of communication, perhaps at both ends of the Syria-Euphrates line: in Ramadi, closer to Baghdad; and in Arah and Qusabayah, near the Syrian border.

There will almost certainly be more heavy fighting in the near future. But it will be necessary to achieve the overall goal of the campaign. And if we are to achieve our political goal in Iraq, this campaign must succeed. ♦

Jindal All the Way

The Louisiana congressman is the head of the freshman class. BY FRED BARNES

WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH toured Stuart, Florida, after Hurricane Jeanne struck the town last September, he met an engineer from Louisiana working as a volunteer with the Federal Emergency Management Administration. "Do you know Bobby Jindal?" the man asked. The president did, recalling Jindal as a senior official at the Department of Health and Human Services, then as the Republican who narrowly lost the race for Louisiana governor in 2003. The questioner, it turned out, was Jindal's father.

It's quite an advantage for a newly elected House member, which Jindal now is, to know the president personally. But in his case, the advantage probably isn't necessary. Given his age (33), his résumé (Brown University, Rhodes Scholar, director of Louisiana colleges, chief of the state's hospitals), and his grasp of issues (health care, especially), Jindal is destined to be a star in Washington. He was elected to a House seat in Louisiana with 78 percent of the vote on November 2 and picked last week to head the 2004 class of 23 House Republican freshmen.

Jindal has other distinctions. He's the lone Indian American in Congress. His parents emigrated from India a few days before he was born.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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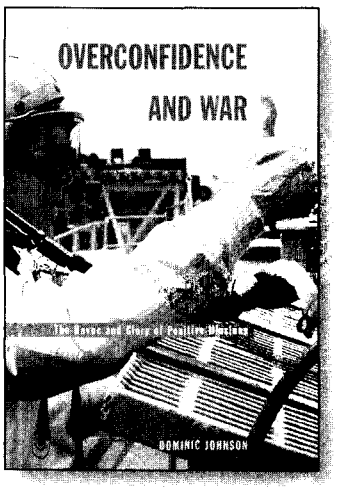

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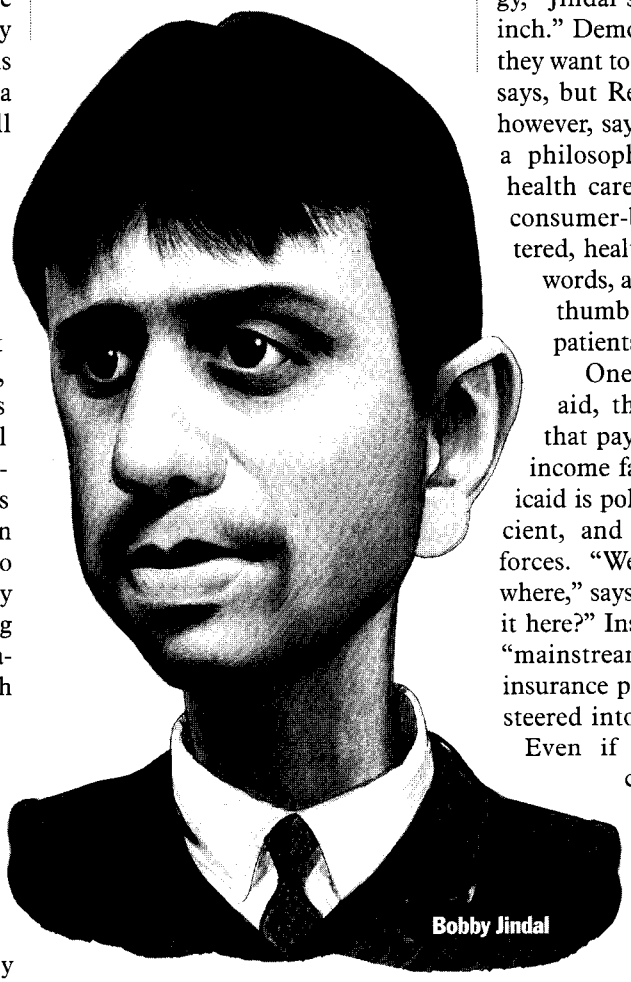
They are Hindu, but Jindal converted to Catholicism as a teenager in Baton Rouge. He comes to Washington with plans to transform the health care system in America. And he may know more about the system, from Medicaid to Medicare to private health insurance, than anyone else in Congress. Jindal believes he can be influential on the issue in his first year in the House, even though he won't be on one of the committees directly dealing with health care. "If you focus on policy," he says, "you can make a difference from the first day." We'll see.

There's one more thing to know about Jindal: He was the victim of a racist attack by Democrats. In the governor's race, Jindal was leading Democrat Kathleen Blanco in polls—and the Democrats went all out. At a rally in New Orleans, the president of College Democrats of America, Ashley Bell, said Jindal "is Arab American" and "the Republican token attempt to mend bridges long burnt with the Arab-American community." Bell also referred to "Bush's personal 'Do Boy' Bobby Jindal." Blanco was quoted as telling a Democrat eliminated in the primary that "a Hindu out-Catholic'd both of us."

But it was a TV ad in the final week of the campaign that was pivotal. The spot began with a screaming headline, "Wake Up, Louisiana," and concluded by asserting, "They hope we won't wake up until it's too late." The ad was reminiscent of efforts to rally white Southerners against supporters of racial integration and civil rights legislation. And it showed a picture of Jindal with disheveled hair, a picture that some Republicans claimed was touched up to make Jindal's skin look darker. Jindal wound up losing to Blanco in areas where the so-called Bubba vote—white backers of Ku Klux Klansman David Duke in earlier elections—is strong. He lost statewide by 52 to 48 percent.

Jindal never complained publicly about the ad, which criticized his record as hospital chief, or other attacks. Nor did he air a rebuttal. To this day, he's philosophical about his defeat. "I got a faith that sustains me," he says. "I desperately wanted to be governor," but from God's perspective, "it doesn't make a difference" who wins a governor's election. "I've got every reason to be grateful. I didn't feel any regrets. We tried everything we could. When God closes one door, he opens another."


Bobby Jindal

The door that opened was to Washington. With Democratic senator John Breaux retiring, Republican congressman David Vitter decided to run for the Senate. So Jindal, after spending three weeks at Harvard's Institute of Politics and a few weeks recuperating from the governor's race, announced for the vacant House seat. The district, which covers suburban New Orleans, is safely Republican. Jindal moved his home from Baton Rouge into the district and won without a runoff.

Jindal believes that "if it hadn't been for 9/11, health care would be the top domestic issue." And it's a problem for Republicans. Instead of providing an attractive alternative to Democratic proposals, Republicans often come up with merely less expensive versions. "That's a losing strategy," Jindal says. "We'll lose inch by inch." Democrats know exactly what they want to achieve in health care, he says, but Republicans don't. Jindal, however, says it's "important to have a philosophical construct for any health care plan." He does. It's "a consumer-based, individual-centered, health care system." In other words, a system far less under the thumb of government and with patients in charge.

One place to start is Medicaid, the federal-state program that pays for health care for low income families. Jindal says Medicaid is politically controlled, inefficient, and not subject to market forces. "We've rejected this elsewhere," says Jindal, "why do we have it here?" Instead, the poor should be "mainstreamed" into private health insurance plans, just as they've been steered into jobs by welfare reform. Even if government-run health care were cheaper, Jindal says, "I'd still argue that's not a good way to deliver health care."

After health care, Jindal would have Congress move on to tax reform and Social Security reform. Freshman Republicans can play a role in pressing an agenda of conservative reform, he says. "We're a large class and I believe we can have an impact if we stick together," he says. "What I care about is policy. I want to be in the room when we write this stuff." Access to the president may help. When freshman House members went to the White House for lunch in mid-November, the president spotted Jindal and pulled him aside. "Jindal," Bush said, "I met this guy in Florida. . . ." ♦

Illustration by Earl Keleny

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A New Weapon in the Judges' War

Senate Republicans ponder ways to deal with the filibuster. BY DUNCAN CURRIE

THE SENATE'S COLD WAR over judicial nominations is at a crossroads. With a newly minted chamber taking office January 4, and a new minority leader already designated, the time seems ripe for a fresh start. The Republican majority wants an end to all active Democratic filibusters of appellate court nominees and the cession of such tactics in the future. Will the opposition comply?

The answer hinges on two unknowns: first, what lessons Senate Democrats draw from the 2004 election; second, the tone set by their new leader, Nevada senator Harry Reid. Retiring senator Bob Graham has predicted "less willingness" among Democrats "to participate in a filibuster" of circuit court nominees, and Reid claims Republicans are "crying wolf." "My position is this," Reid told reporters on November 16. "Two hundred and three federal judges were approved—203. Ten were turned down. Does that require any kind of a 'nuclear option'? I would certainly think not." Republicans hope for judicial détente. But they're prepared to "go nuclear."

Not that all GOP senators would use that term. Many prefer the gentler "constitutional option." Whatever the nomenclature, at issue is a controversial parliamentary maneuver. Essentially, Republicans would alter Senate procedure on judicial confirmations in order to prevent filibusters.

Just *how* they'd do so is unclear. The nuclear option could take several shapes. For instance, GOP senators might seek to officially change Senate rules. Or, they might simply reinterpret Senate precedent. In one widely discussed scenario, Republicans would secure a ruling from the chair that would allow them to obtain cloture on judicial nominations by majority vote. When this decision came down, Democrats would appeal. Republicans would need 51 votes (or 50 plus Vice President Cheney) to table the appeal and uphold the ruling.

GOP senators have toyed with such ideas for almost two years, but they didn't have enough votes. In a de facto 51-49 Senate, there weren't enough Republicans on board. The chief GOP holdouts were Susan Collins, Lincoln Chafee, and Olympia Snowe, while John McCain and Arlen Specter were leery. McCain and Specter are still hedging, but that might not matter. With Senate Republicans soon to be brandishing an effective 55-45 majority, they could have the votes to move forward regardless.

"I think the numbers might actually be there this time," says one GOP Judiciary staffer. "Yes, it's more likely" now, affirms a senior Republican aide. With 55 seats, Republicans "can lose 5 [votes] and still be okay." And if GOP senators don't push the button? "We are on a path to 20, 30, who knows how many filibusters," says the aide. Not to mention the possible filibuster of a future Supreme Court choice.

So far, ten of President Bush's appellate nominees have been filibustered. (One, Miguel Estrada, withdrew his name in September 2003; two others, Charles Pickering and William Pryor, were given recess

Duncan Currie is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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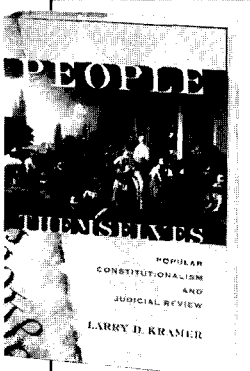

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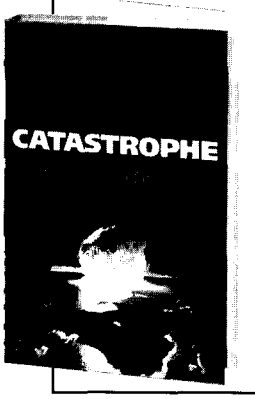

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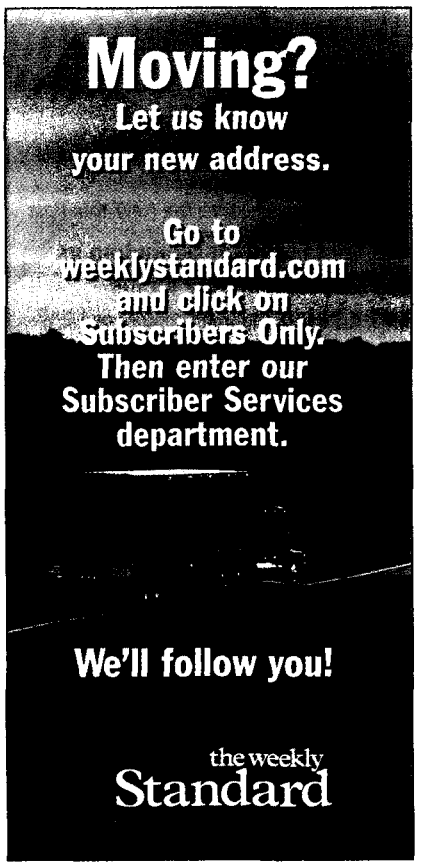
appointments that will soon expire.) These filibusters are unprecedented. And Democrats have pegged at least six more circuit court picks for similar treatment. Each of the filibustered designees would breeze through on a floor vote. But the Senate minority now wields a practical veto over judges.

Republicans have screamed bloody murder, to no avail. The nuclear (or constitutional) option once seemed a pipe dream. Now, as Majority Leader Bill Frist recently indicated to the Federalist Society, it's a real possibility.

But what of its legality? If Republicans merely tinker with Senate precedent, they're on sturdy ground. If GOP senators look to formally amend Senate rules by majority vote, they may be okay, too—at least according to a wide swath of constitutional experts.

Indeed, myriad scholars argue Senate Rule XXII, which requires a two-thirds supermajority for cloture on rules changes, is unconstitutional.



They cite a timeworn Anglo-American tenet that prevents legislators from binding their successors. This principle stretches from William Blackstone through James Madison. "One legislature doesn't have the authority to tie the hands of another legislature," says Duke law professor Erwin Chemerinsky, a prominent liberal. Rule XXII thus entails "impermissible entrenchment."

Michael Rappaport, a conservative law professor at the University of San Diego, agrees. "A majority of the Senate, constitutionally, *has* to have the right to change that filibuster rule," he says. The murky bit is just *when* or *how often* a majority can exercise that right. As presidents of the Senate, Rappaport notes, Richard Nixon, Hubert Humphrey, and Nelson Rockefeller all held that a majority could amend Senate rules at the outset of a new session. Those aren't "clear precedents," he acknowledges, since Humphrey's ruling was overturned. "But it's by no means a new view, or an unprecedented view."

Either way, GOP senators remain hesitant to pull the trigger. "It's called the 'nuclear option' because I think the Senate would literally melt down," explains Chemerinsky. "The Democrats would simply grind the Senate to a halt." Anxiety over such fallout may eventually prompt Republicans to go wobbly. But they hope not to reach that pass. Republicans say judicial gridlock was a big loser for Democratic Senate candidates this year. They point especially to the unseating of outgoing minority leader Tom Daschle.

"Tom Daschle's defeat was very instructive," says Texas Republican John Cornyn. "Until then, the Democrats had calculated that all of this was beneath the radar of most of the electorate, and that there wasn't any penalty to be paid. . . . But I think that one of the reasons Daschle was defeated was because of obstructing the president's judicial nominees." Cornyn believes this may chasten Daschle's colleagues.

Ideally, yes. With Daschle gone, some Democrats might abandon the filibusters. Four moderate red-state Democrats—Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, Kent Conrad of North Dakota, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, and Bill Nelson of Florida—are up for reelection in 2006. So are blue-state moderates Mark Dayton of Minnesota and Tom Carper of Delaware. But powerful liberals Ted Kennedy, Chuck Schumer, and Richard Durbin have already been rattling swords. And should Bush have the boldness to continue tapping judicial conservatives, especially those who have been critical of *Roe* v. *Wade*, the liberals will remain in high dudgeon. The confirmation fracas, after all, is at root a debate over judicial philosophy.

Even if Republicans have the votes, my guess is they won't push the nuclear button anytime soon. But by leaving the door open, they could gain leverage. History offers a guide here. On at least three occasions—in 1917, 1959, and 1975—a variation of what's now called the nuclear option was deployed or seriously threatened as a catalytic mechanism to force changes in Senate rules. That is, senators acted under the palpable *fear* of a majority's going nuclear. Today, Frist's warning—if seen as credible—might bring the same result.

The most viable trade-off would be the Frist-Miller Filibuster Reform bill, floated in May 2003. Under this reform, the number of votes needed for cloture on judicial nominations would decline progressively with each attempt. The first try would require 60 votes, the second 57, then 54, then 51, and finally a simple majority. (The bill is modeled on legislation proposed by Democrats Tom Harkin and Joe Lieberman in 1995 but defeated.) Of course, since this is a rules change, it would itself need supermajority support to stave off a Democratic filibuster. And indeed, the threat of a filibuster has heretofore kept Frist-Miller in legislative limbo.

Republicans are being tight-lipped about their strategy. Yet it's clear they find the status quo untenable. As Frist told the Federalist Society, "One way or another, the filibuster of judicial nominees must end." ♦

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Be Afraid . . .

There could be nasty economic surprises during the next four years. BY DAVID M. SMICK

REPUBLICANS, giddy and gloating, are understandably proud of the outcome of the election. Democrats from Boston to San Francisco are on a 24-hour suicide watch. Before the GOP euphoria gets out of hand, though, consider that the next four years could be challenging in ways unimagined.

I'm not thinking mainly of the president's domestic agenda, court vacancies, or Iraq, difficult as those tasks may be. No, the far greater challenge may come in mastering the global economic Rubik's Cube of a world dramatically more financially integrated than even when the president's father was in office. No surprise event, sudden imbalance, or price shock occurs these days without ramifications on our shores. Worse, a lot of the old, reliable solutions may no longer suffice. Even the experts are confounded.

Begin with the price of oil. Some optimists suggest a return to the high $20 per barrel level is possible; others make a plausible case for a permanent jump to $60. Philip Verleger, an expert at the Institute for International Economics, goes further: "The situation . . . today bears a remarkable similarity to the one observed in the late 1960s. . . . In theory, crude prices might rise to $160 per barrel if history followed the 1973 script precisely."

While even $60 oil ain't beanbag from a U.S. standpoint, it would be devastating for China, possibly collapsing its banking system. Why is that important to Americans? The U.S. budget deficit is large, but interest rates have stayed low here because the countries with which we run large trade deficits tend to reinvest their surplus dollars in U.S. Treasuries. Economist David Hale argues that the funding that helps keep U.S. interest rates low comes from commodity-producing countries that have benefited from the impact of China's economic boom on their export prices. Put another way, the future of the U.S. dollar will depend on the longevity of the Chinese boom.

Again, some experts see China booming for as far as the eye can see. Yet a growing number are beginning to warn of trouble ahead, starting with the failure of Chinese consumption in recent years to underpin overall growth. Is a Chinese bubble about to burst? One Western analyst writes that the latest cottage industry in China is getting the money of elites out of the country, often in suitcases. What do they know that we don't?

No surprise event, sudden imbalance, or price shock occurs these days without ramifications on our shores.

Despite the large U.S. budget and trade deficits, why are interest rates still so low, against all mainstream economic thinking? More specifically, why did the long-term bond market rally each time the Fed began raising short-term rates in the past six months, something that hasn't happened since the 1960s? The Fed offers positive spin—that the market is simply convinced of the central bank's inflation-fighting credibility. IMF experts suggest that because of the aging U.S. population, pension funds are merely engaged in a long-term shift of their portfolios from equities to bonds.

A more troubling hypothesis comes from Japan, where some analysts argue that the U.S. experience since the information technology bubble burst in 2001 bears a remarkable resemblance to Japan's frustrating economic decline and stagnation in the 1990s. U.S. interest rates remain low and monetary policy relatively ineffective, they say, because corporate demand for debt has come to a standstill. Analysts at Nomura Research call this the "corporate debt rejection syndrome." In light of America's cautious corporate sector, which is now in surplus, they think the federal deficit and public borrowing are a godsend. Such thinking of course runs counter to the global consensus view, which is why it is so troubling.

Not worried yet? Consider the scenario offered by analysts such as Roger Kubarych of a coming U.S. private pension crisis which could wreck the auto industry. Or try this on for size: Remember the scare of a decade ago over the dangers of financial derivatives? Measured at the end of the first quarter of 2004, derivatives held by U.S. commercial banks rose to $76.5 trillion—a 21.2 percent jump in one year alone!

Then there's what Michael Ledeen describes as "the old reliable: human stupidity." One foolhardy move by an important government or a megacorporation or global hackers suddenly successful in gumming up the financial system, and George W. Bush could really have his hands full. Fiddling with the Rubik's Cube, the effects could quickly spread and be impossible to undo.

This is why Republicans need to balance their postelection gloating and glee with a dash of humility. It's a dangerous world out there. Bad things happen, and it's in the interest of a lot of people around the world to see George Bush fall flat on his face.♦

David M. Smick is the founder of Johnson Smick International and editor and publisher of International Economy *magazine.*

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Clintonmania

It never ends in Arkansas

By Matt Labash

Little Rock, Arkansas

During the weeklong lead-up to the opening of the Clinton Presidential Center, I felt as though I was stuck in The College Nightmare. You know the one: Every professor you have is giving an exam concurrently, and you don't know which one to take. It just didn't seem fair. There were so many ways to celebrate President William Jefferson Clinton. How could I pass up any of them?

I wanted to take all my meals at Doe's Eat Place, Clinton's famous roadhouse-meets-steakhouse hangout, where the manager told me Clinton used to pop into the kitchen and snatch handfuls of fries right out of the fryer basket. But then, my hotel was next-door to his regular McDonald's, which boasted "The McRib is back!" in honor of the special week. Like millions of other Americans, I wanted to see Clinton's New Balance jogging shoes and the actual pair of shades he wore while blowing sax on Arsenio Hall, both of which are on display at the Old Statehouse. But then, the same actual sunglasses are purportedly on display at his new library. (Perhaps one pair was a stunt double.)

I couldn't shave myself in the morning if I missed "An Evening of Readings: The Poets of the Clinton Presidency." But if I went—hold on to your Maya Angelou—I might miss the lecture by White House Executive Pastry Chef Roland Mesnier, who seemed to capture the spirit of the Clinton years when he said, "Dessert time is happy time."

And of course, Bill Clinton was our first black president. But how best to observe this? At the "Evening Reception Honoring the Diverse Legacy and Phenomenal Achievements of President Clinton," in which we also saluted "unsung heroes," anonymous little worker bees like Cicely Tyson and Quincy Jones? Or perhaps at the Clinton speech at Little Rock's Central High, where, as history buffs will note, in 1957, against the wishes of Governor Orval Faubus, an 11-year-old Bill Clinton led the Little Rock Nine to school in the country's definitive desegregation battle, shortly after he drafted the Emancipation Proclamation?

Matt Labash is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

Standing in the shadow of such greatness is a humbling experience. Indeed, it was hard to measure up. I mean sure, you could participate in the kickoff 5K Presidential Fun Run, retracing the giant steps Clinton used to take when he'd pull on those silky jogging shorts. But all you'd get for your $25 entry fee was a T-shirt and a cup of Gatorade. Your run would never be as fun as Clinton's, since, as Gennifer Flowers once wrote, "Bill loved to jog in the morning, and it was an easy way to get out of the mansion without arousing suspicions. He would jog just over a mile to my place, spend a half hour or so making love to me, then have his driver drop him off a block or two from the mansion. . . . He would show up at home properly out of breath."

Hold up a second. Was that me? Did I just say Gennifer Flowers? What an embarrassing lapse—she wasn't part of the official program! The thing to realize about Clinton Week, as did the legions of celebrities and former administration types who descended on Little Rock hauling oxygen tanks and defibrillator paddles to help resuscitate the legacy of their hero, is that this wasn't some hollow exercise, but rather, a religious experience. It's why people sat in the torrential downpour of the Clinton Center's dedication day, enduring hours of speeches and U2's Bono letting loose with yet another harangue about forgiving Third World debt. Mentioning Flowers, or Monica Lewinsky, or impeachment, or the myriad other Clinton scandals that most readily defined his presidency was, to borrow a regionalism, a bit like farting in church.

There were, however, strange smells emanating from the back pews. There was the protester in front of the Convention Center, brandishing a plumbing pipe from which dangled a kneepad in tribute to Lewinsky. "I'm drawing thumbs up, as well as middle fingers," he told me. "Right now, they're running about even."

Then there was the hardy band from *shadowgov.com*, who ran 30 strong, including their small children, and who took to the streets in black T-shirts that read "Judge Rightly isn't some guy's name." Their message, as told through chants and signs, was elegantly simple: "Clinton Raped Juanita," a reference to former campaign volunteer Juanita Broaddrick, who claimed in 1999 that Clinton had raped her back in the seventies. As onlookers flocked to the Peabody Hotel hoping to spy Oprah or Brad Pitt coming out of what was formerly the Excelsior (where Clinton

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allegedly invited Paula Jones to "kiss it"), the *shadowgovers* screamed, "Clinton is a rapist!" eliciting all sorts of confused responses, from "Clinton is not a racist!" to "Who's Juanita?"

Since the best way for Clintonites to remember Clinton fondly is to forget, amnesiac tendencies are hoped for and even counted on by those bringing us the Clinton Presidential Center. Exhibit designer Ralph Appelbaum says the guiding lights were old Clinton hands John Podesta and Bruce Lindsey, who had editorial approval of the exhibits, along with Clinton himself, whom Appelbaum calls "the curator in chief."

Sitting on manicured parkland that abuts the Arkansas River, the glass-and-steel eco-conscious building (it has solar panels and floors fashioned from renewable bamboo and recycled tires) has been given plaudits for its design. Locals, however, deride it as a "trailer on steroids" because of its boxy resemblance to a Conex container or garbage bin (at any moment, one expects an oversized sanitation truck to pull up, fork it with its prongs, and dump the contents over the grounds, which will eventually feature barbecue pits since, as the center's landscape designer says, Clinton "likes to talk over food").

Enter the building, an airy space bathed with the light of a modern art gallery, and your senses are overwhelmed by all the squawk-boxes and tickers pounding you with policy bullet points. This is how the Clintons have always kept score. Though Clinton prides himself on coming from a southern storytelling tradition, his library has the cold sterility of a campaign brochure. With all the competing statistical claims—Clinton moved 75 percent of welfare recipients into jobs, increased classroom Internet access 77 percent—the Center resembles a busy trading floor in Al Gore's dreams.

Even by the whitewashing standards of presidential libraries, Clinton's stands out. He comes across like a president on a job interview with historians. In thematic alcoves bedecked with self-serving slogans like "Putting People First" and "Expanding Our Shared Prosperity," no accomplishment is too minor to trumpet. (He "launched a quiet revolution in adult education" and helmed the first administration to recognize Ramadan!) Hillary's alcove is worse. It features just about every meaningless award she has ever won, right down to the coveted African Ambassadors' Spouses Association statuette.

Yet when the curators try to humanize things, the results are often just as strained. Featured contributions from celebrities and dignitaries make the place come off like a gift shop at a bad tourist trap (the world-leader nesting dolls, the ceramic Buddy the Labrador lawn ornament). Equally painful is the "A time to laugh—the Clintons' humor" video display, in which we learn what natural stitches the Clintons are from the earnest voiceover: "Laughter is good medicine. And President Clinton brought a lot of good humor to nearly every challenging day during his years in office."

Some days, of course, were more challenging than others. Like the day he was impeached, or the day he faced accusations that he'd had sex with a White House intern. Library officials claim, without laughing, that Clinton deals with this forthrightly, in a little sleight-of-hand alcove called "The Fight for Power," a propaganda nook that would do Kim Jong Il proud.

In a morality tale too tortured to replicate here, Clinton traces the trajectory of his impeachment trial all the way back to the Contract With America, and decries the "radicalism of the Republican agenda." Diabolical right-wingers wanted to abolish the New Deal and starve Medicare, and it became "common right-wing practice not just to attack Democrats' ideas, but also to question their motives, morals, and patriotism." And to attack sitting presidents for getting blowjobs from interns, and lying in civil suits—but all of that is left unsaid. In fact, Paula Jones isn't mentioned, and Lewinsky's name appears only once by my count.

In the Clinton library, Heaven's Gate cult leader Marshall Applewhite warrants more mentions than Lewinsky (he at least gets a photo), and the entirety of the Clinton scandals is dispatched in about as much exhibit space as is enjoyed by the White House Easter Egg Roll. In a recent survey of historians, Clinton's moral-authority ranking placed him dead last among presidents, behind even Richard Nixon. But in Clinton's telling, impeachment sounds like a good break, since throughout the battle "his administration continued to enjoy high public approval ratings and to implement much of their agenda."

As I stood taking notes on the exhibit, I overheard some visitors unclear as to what the whole rigmarole was even about. When one daughter asked her father why Clinton was impeached, he replied, "I think it had something to do with Whitewater." Another man, who'd wanted to come to the Clinton library for his birthday, pointed out to me that roughly four-fifths of the exhibit seemed to be Clinton apportioning blame for his travails. Looking for Lewinsky, he said, "The only picture they have of her is right here." I pointed out that the photo of a woman in a jail jumpsuit and leg irons was actually Susan McDougal. "Oh," he said, "then I guess they don't have any."

But amateurs aren't the only ones who are confused. When I ran into former Clinton flack Mike McCurry, on his way into one of the scores of Clintonite parties, I asked him what he thought of the scandal alcove. He smiled, then in perhaps the only candid admission I heard from a

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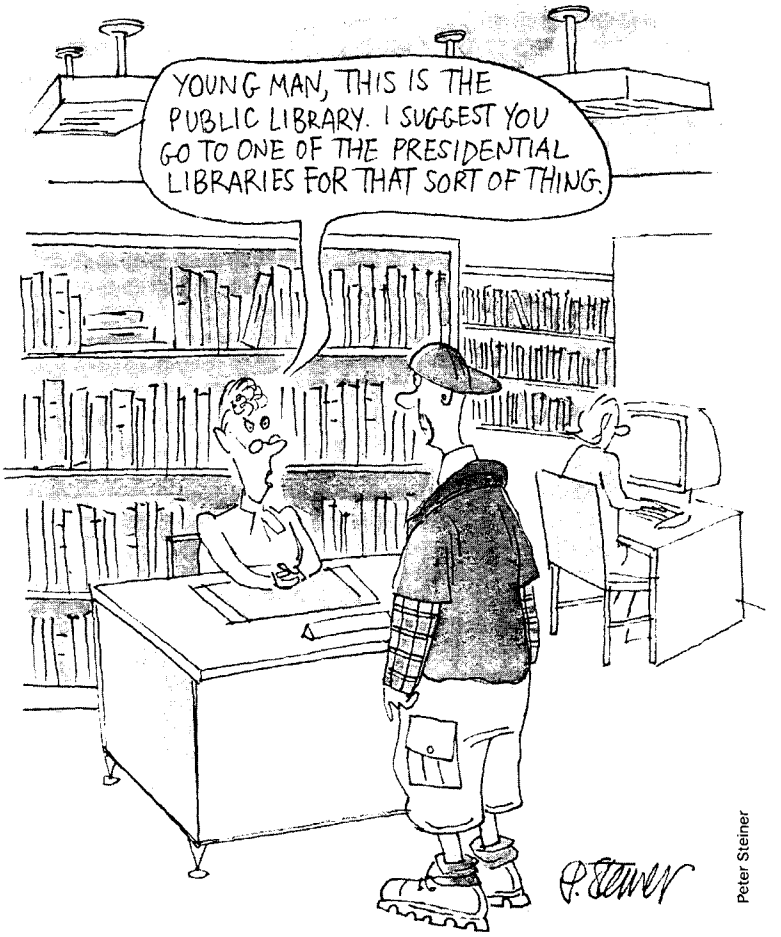

Peter Steiner

Clintonite all week, he said, "What I wanted to know was what would my kids say? Would they really know what was going on? I did like the architecture."

After four days of choking on revisionist adulation, I was in need of a good palate-cleansing. So I sought to revisit some portions of the Clinton legacy that get short shrift in the library—the amusing all-too-human reminders that no matter how grandiosely the former president strives to recast his narrative as Shakespearean drama, the footnotes tend to read like Rabelaisian farce.

However many rotating exhibits the library hosts, none will ever be dedicated to Connie Hamzy, aka "Sweet, Sweet Connie," the rock'n'roll supergroupie who was immortalized in a Grand Funk Railroad song. Connie had the distinction of being the first of Clinton's many "bimbo eruptions" when, in 1992, she told *Penthouse* the tale of how Clinton, then governor of Arkansas, had approached her while she was lying beside a hotel pool, and said, "I want to get with you." According to Connie, they couldn't find a hotel room, so instead they made do with a discreet corner for groping. Clinton denied the charges, and *Newsweek* reported that Hillary wanted to destroy Connie's credibility. Hamzy later passed a polygraph, preserving her reputation—such as it is.

The years haven't been kind to Connie. She's been arrested for public intoxication and for endangering a minor she allowed to drive her car. Today she survives on disability ("my nut money," she calls the compensation for her bipolar disorder) and earnings from a part-time job passing out strollers at the zoo. Her shoebox house in a bad neighborhood in Little Rock is a monument to cat-hair and bong smoke. When I arrive, she is finishing a photo-shoot with a photographer from *Spin*, who looks like he's just been through a war.

Apparently, Connie has spent the photo session on the sauce and the weed, and they've experienced all manner of creative differences. Plus, she tried to hit on him. "I told her I was gay," he says, as he hurriedly loads equipment into his car. "I've GOT to get out of here. Good luck." When I walk into her living room, Connie's still muttering about the photographer's arty pretentiousness. "Plus, he's a fag," she says.

Her house is a rock'n'roll museum, full of drumsticks and guitar picks that she earned the hard way. Connie has slept with most of the rockers in the photos, or at least their roadies. So we play a quick game of Who Have You Done? I point to a picture of Fleetwood Mac, a Clinton favorite. "Did 'em all," she says. "Even the women?" I ask. "Close, but no cigar," she sighs. Connie's a hard woman, her voice is all sandpaper and cigarettes. And being a supergroupie, she tends toward the friendly side. I'm not in her house five minutes before she grabs my behind. When I ask how old she is, she responds, "How old do you think I am?," pulls up her sweater, and bares her breasts. (She's 49; her breasts might very well be younger.)

I've already mentioned that I'm married with kids, so it's too late to play the gay card. Instead, I take her to Zac's, her favorite watering hole, or at least the favorite one she's not been banned from, reasoning that there, she's less likely to get naked. She orders a meal, as well as some extra cornbread and cheesecake "for Thanksgiving."

My largesse has put her in a chatty mood, and the subject is Clinton, who she calls "the clown prince of presidents." "I was the first woman to ever say a word about the motherf—er," she says, with no small amount of pride. And she laughs out loud at Clinton's rain-plagued library-opening ceremony. "His damn karma f—ed it up," she says. She resents being portrayed as a liar and points out, for the 24th time, that she passed a polygraph administered

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by the *American Spectator*, a fine magazine she says, even if they don't have recipes. "Every magazine ought to have recipes."

Sure, Connie realizes, she's a woman who has slept with 24 men in the course of a single Allman Brothers concert. But Clinton? He has no propriety. "He was doin' it in the Oval Office!" she says. Of her original disclosure she insists, "I don't regret a thing. I'm willing to die for this issue." And Sweet Connie is a reminder that to many, the Clinton wars will never be over. "Hillary let that old man of hers call me a liar. If she runs for prez, I'm going to be out of the chute. I might be a slut and a whore. But I'm no liar."

From there, I was off to Hot Springs to see an old acquaintance, Parker Dozhier. Dozhier, you might recall, briefly gained infamy as the proprietor of Dozhier's Bait Shop on the Ouachita River. He was one of the Arkansas point men in the *American Spectator*'s much ballyhooed "Arkansas Project" (which the Clinton library takes care to mention); his fortune-telling ex-girlfriend claimed he'd sought to influence the testimony of Whitewater witness David Hale, who found sanctuary at Parker's fishing camp when he was a government witness. The charges were investigated, and found not to have merit. Other than lending Hale an old beater and letting him escape the media/Clinton heat in a vacant lodge, Parker says the extent of his payments to Hale was "getting him a Coke out of the drink box at the shop. You can't bribe a witness with that."

As a fresh-from-college research assistant at the *American Spectator* in the mid-'90s, I never heard the term "Arkansas Project" until years after I left. But my colleagues and I were amused that so many thought it responsible for so much. The heavy breathers and conspiracy theorists in Arkansas and elsewhere that we typically peppered for "hot leads" were unlikely to find their car keys, let alone information to bring down the president.

But Parker was one of my favorites. A raconteur and Renaissance man, he bears resemblance to a handsomer Jack Elam (without the scary goggle eye), and has done just about everything a man can do. "Matt, it's like a damn explosion in a career-day class," he says. He's been a television reporter, and a trapper, and a columnist for a fur magazine (if you need to know how much wild mink pelts are going for, Parker's your man). He's done disability evaluations for "whiplash-willies and slip-and-falls," was a publicity man for casinos in Istanbul, and, oh yeah, he used to detonate bridges. So taking down a president was just "somethin' else to do."

Dozhier describes himself as "f—in' Forrest Gump." He always seems to find action, unless it finds him first. He's gotten drunk with Hemingway, and was serendipitously driving past Mt. St. Helens when it erupted. He slipped photos of the Little Rock Nine to *Life* magazine, back when he was a student at Central High. The David Hale charge had some irony, since most people don't know that it was Hale who used to be Dozhier's landlord many years ago. Likewise, Parker dated Gennifer Flowers (whom he calls "a straight shooter") long before Clinton did, when she was still a brunette. And he even knows Sweet Connie. They used to drink at the same bar, along with Vince Foster. He hasn't, however, known her intimately. "God awmighty," he says when I ask him. "They'd have to check you into the Mayo Clinic. She's probably got diseases they haven't even named yet."

When I tell him I saw Connie's breasts, he laughs uncontrollably. "Who hasn't?" he says. I'd asked Parker, for kicks, to go with me to the Clinton library. "Thanks, Matt," he said, "but I'd rather go to a hog-scalding." I spy a copy of Clinton's book, *My Life*, on his bookshelf, but Parker says he couldn't read it (though it mentions him). "It's not readable. The most disjointed sonofabitch I've ever seen. There's no policy in it, it's just wonk."

Though Parker was in the habit of dashing off white papers to *American Spectator* editors, which he estimates resulted in exactly one story, he still claims Whitewater stinks to high heaven—it wasn't just a failed land deal, but a successful plan to loot a savings and loan. He thinks special prosecutor Ken Starr could've put Clinton away if he hadn't lost his nerve, though he suspects there'd have been a "constitutional crisis," especially since Starr's star witnesses were convicted felons (David Hale) or dead ones (James McDougal).

The media portrayals of Parker as some backwoods hustler still pain him. "If I'm trying to coerce some lady into my web—and I'm still holding auditions," he says, "she'll punch me up on the Internet, and my God, I'm a caveman." But it's a legacy he's willing to bear, if it means that in whatever small way he contributed to Clinton's troubles. Of the library's revisionism, Parker says, "My God, man, he's the only elected president who's ever been impeached. They can't take that away from him. . . . He thinks he's Elvis. He's taken on this persona of a rock star. He's an entertainer. He's an actor. And I suppose, to be a really good actor, one almost has to be a sociopath, to believe the lies that are the lines."

From Parker's, I'm off to the elegant Arlington Hotel in Hot Springs, on a mission with Dolly Kyle Browning. I have convinced her to take me to her 40th high school reunion, which is, by extension, Bill Clinton's 40th high school reunion, since they graduated together. They dated when they were kids, going to The Malco movie theater or hanging out at Cook's Ice Cream shop or going "to see the duck," as the kids used to say,

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referring to the drive up West Mountain where they would park and make out on a bluff that overlooked the city lights, which formed the shape of a duck.

But it is for her alleged two-decade-long, off-and-on, adulterous affair with Clinton that the former real-estate attorney from Dallas is most famous. She detailed it in her roman à clef *Purposes of the Heart* (published in 1997 by her husband, Doc, an athletic trainer who also sells "the finest ginger cookies in the history of the world" on the Internet). The book recounts her, or rather "Kelly's," affair with a libidinous and amoral southern governor named Cameron Coulter, who is saddled with a loveless marriage and a thick-ankled wife named Mallory Cheatham.

Dolly, a blonde with self-described "sea-mist green eyes," is brassy and sassy, witty and tough. (She carries an unregistered .38 in her purse, and keeps a finger on the trigger when she walks to her car.) Dolly dismisses the Flowers affair as a "12-year one-night-stand." By contrast, she and Clinton used to have real feelings for each other, she claims, though that ended after she got religion and also was threatened in no uncertain terms that if she talked, as Flowers had, she'd be ruined. She began writing her book as a "codependency journal" during her therapy for sex addiction, and took it public in response to what she considers Clinton's boorish behavior.

Pre-reunion, she spins me around their old town, a former gambling mecca, whose restorative hot baths (still a feature of bathhouse-row hotels) used to attract everyone from rheumatics to clap sufferers drawn by tourism literature that claimed, "Here tottering forms, but skin and bone, are rescued from the grave." Throughout our drive, she seems disappointed. "That used to be pretty," she'll say, or, pointing to new construction, "Look at that ugly monstrosity—somewhere along the way, someone without taste moved in and took over."

Dolly's Clinton roots run deep. Her sister, before marrying, dated both Roger Clinton and Jim McDougal. Her late daddy, she says, had a fling with Clinton's late mother, Virginia. "Welcome to Arkansas," she says. She drives me past Clinton's boyhood homes. One's now boarded up with fire damage, though Dolly says "the fence is new. It's plastic—Virginia loved plastic." The other sits across the street from an abandoned Bonanza Steakhouse cow, grazing in the parking lot of a drive-thru liquor store. Clinton's schools haven't fared much better. His high school has punched-out windows and anarchist graffiti. His grade school is the headquarters for a ramshackle church run by an Internet radio talkshow host/UFOlogist who tells me that he thinks the Clinton library "is a big trailer on stilts." "At least it's a double-wide," chimes in Dolly.

Dolly abruptly cuts off the tour so that she can shed her jeans and Fox News hat (Sean Hannity is on her speed-dial), and go back to the hotel to "get beautiful." I tell her she already looks better than most of her classmates that I've seen milling around the hotel bar. "I don't want to be winning by a nose," she says, "I want to be winning by a mile." I ask her if the nostalgia tour makes her wistful for her days with Clinton. After all, the no-tell motel they sometimes shared just out of college is two-tenths of a mile down the block. "I'm nostalgic for it like you are for typhoid fever after you finally get over it." Well, who then is she anxious to see? "Whoever I look better than," she says.

We expect Clinton to show at the reunion that night, but he doesn't, we're told, because of post-bypass-operation fatigue. "One more opportunity to be the big star," Dolly sighs. "He must've been really exhausted, or else Hillary stuck that nose-ring in him and dragged him back to New York." For Dolly and me, the reunion is a bit of a disaster. I try to fit in, and play it low key, slipping off to the bathroom to scribble notes every few minutes, making people wonder why the guy who's 25 years younger than everyone in the room has the weakest bladder. But then I tell people who I am and what I'm doing. The disclosure earns me a tail, a snappish woman who looks like she captained the school's Sumo wrestling team. A former reporter for the school paper, she warns everyone not to talk to me since I'm from a conservative magazine. (I demand that we dance and make up, an offer she curtly rebuffs.)

Dolly, while earning plenty of ogles and good wishes from male classmates, is, with several exceptions, either snubbed outright by the women or talked about behind her back. As he leaves, Phil Jamison, Hot Springs High's 1964 class president/tailback/track-sprinter ("now running interference for Clinton," as Dolly says), pats Dolly on the shoulder, and says condescendingly, "We don't mind at all that you came." "Why would you?" Dolly responds icily.

Over a post-mortem breakfast the next morning, Dolly waves off the Clinton homers who are her detractors. "They're such weenies. This is their whole world, and I'm rockin' it." Of Clinton, she says, "His whole program ever since he got into politics was to rewrite who he is. He wants to come across as a statesman, when in fact, he's the consummate politician. I don't think there's been very many better than he is. But it's unfortunate that he never developed character so that he didn't have to make up a legacy as told by the Clinton library—my sister calls it 'the adult bookstore.'"

At least, I suggest, maybe all the Clinton-centric divisiveness that plagued us throughout the nineties is over. Dolly looks at me like I'm drunk. "It's never over," she says. "The legacy is just starting to be rewritten. How could you say it's over when they just opened that LIE-berry?" ♦

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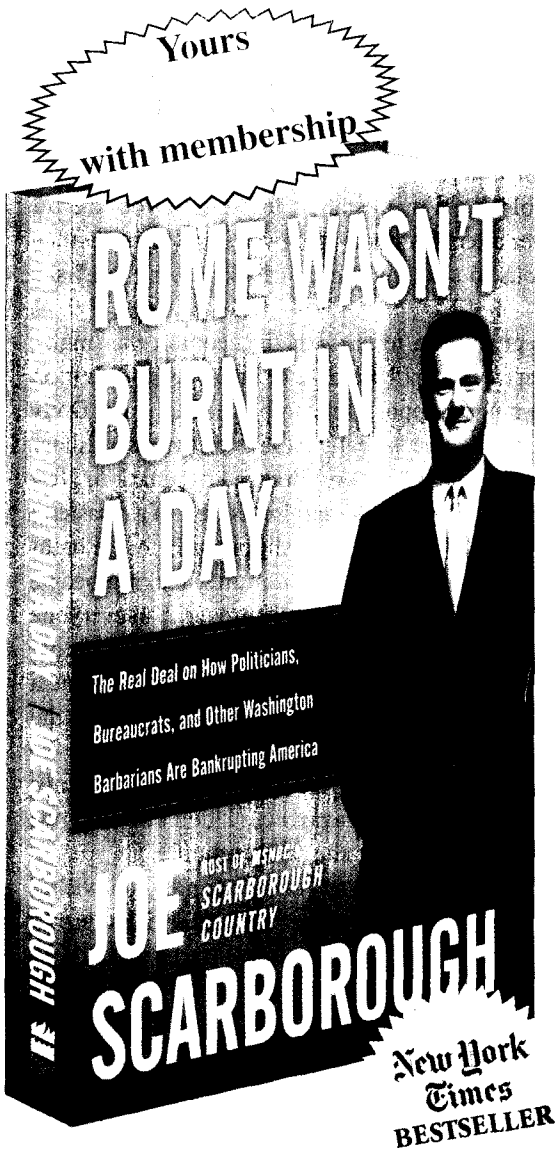
Joe Scarborough takes on the pork barons



"... a Congress far, far ... believed in smaller ... wouldn't know it now."

That's what the *Wall Street Journal* said in June 2004. In ***Rome Wasn't Burnt In A Day: The Real Deal on How Politicians, Bureaucrats, and Other Washington Barbarians Are Bankrupting America***, former Congressman Joe Scarborough (host of Scarborough Country) shows why. The proud party of Reagan, says Scarborough, is dead—and has been replaced by a gang of self-serving plutocrats who don't think twice about lining up at the pork trough with just as much gusto as any Democrat ever displayed.

Scarborough shares the fruits of his experience in Congress (which he entered as part of the Republican Revolution of 1994 as a 31-year-old reformer). He shows how Washington truly functions by taking you behind the closed doors of Congress, into Oval Office meetings, onto Air Force One, and deep inside the corridors of power to which few Americans are ever granted access. He recounts what happened to the idealistic conservatives who were elected to Congress with him in 1994.

In doing so, he demonstrates that the rampant spending and uncontrolled government growth that plague our nation today are truly bipartisan problems. He lists hair-raising and harebrained projects that you and I have paid for with our tax dollars: 12 million dollars for a vanity project named the Patrick Leahy War Victims Fund in Vermont; a million dollars to study brown tree snakes; another million dollars to study the Mormon Cricket in Utah; $700,000 for the Silver Ring Thing Museum in Pennsylvania; $300,000 for the Universal Kitchen Design Museum in Iowa; and much more.

Above all, Scarborough provides a series of practical proposals for how this outrageous waste of the taxpayers' money can and must be fixed now—and how the Republican Party can be called back to its principles of small, responsible government.

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Capote dancing with Marilyn Monroe at El Morocco in 1955. CORBIS.

A Lad of the World

Truman Capote and the cost of charm By Joseph Epstein

Charm was Truman Capote's specialty, the propellant that lifted him early off the launching pad of obscurity and sent him, for a brief while, into the stratosphere of celebrity of a luminosity given to only a few writers in the history of this country: After Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway, no one else comes to mind. Capote could be charming on the page or in person. His prose, always rhythmically on beat, featured lilting phrases. In no other writer would Haitian ladies on the porch of a bordello "flourish paper fans that beat the air like delirious moths"; or a middle-aged woman take off her rimless spectacles to reveal eyes that, "nude and moist and helpless, seemed stunned by freedom; the skimpily lashed lids fluttered like long captive birds abruptly let loose." Who but Capote could write to a friend that "there is going to be a beauty contest on Saturday to pick a Miss Taormina: if I win will send you a telegram"?

Joseph Epstein is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

Too Brief a Treat
The Letters of Truman Capote
edited by Gerald Clarke
Random House, 487 pp., $27.95

Truman Capote was of course gayer than a leap year Mardi Gras. Small, delicately featured, with a famously high and piping voice, he would have had a tough time *passing*, to use the old-fashioned phrase. Not that it often occurred to him to do so. He appears to have been perfectly at ease with his homosexuality. He played it, too, for charm.

Charm is the desire to delight, light-handedly executed. In most definitions of charm the word "magic" turns up, and there is, in fact, something magical about the gift of charm, for it reminds us that the world, for all its dreariness and depression, suffering and sadness, is still a highly amusing place. When he was up to it, which he was most of the time, Truman Capote could almost unfailingly provide such reminders.

The standard—and rather boring—line on Capote's charm is that it was a dodge through which he hoped to attain the love he had missed as a child. In a letter to Perry Smith, one of the two killers who are at the center of his immensely successful work of reportage *In Cold Blood*, Capote provided a quick sketch of his childhood:

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The "lad of the world": Capote in the 1940s.

> I was an only child, and very small for my age—and always the smallest boy in school. When I was three, my mother and father were divorced. . . . My father (who has been married five times) was a traveling salesman, and I spent much of my childhood wandering around the South with him. He was not unkind to me, but I disliked him and still do. My mother was only sixteen when I was born and was *very* beautiful. She married a fairly rich man, a Cuban, and after I was 10 I lived with them (mostly in New York). Unfortunately, my mother, who had several miscarriages and as a result developed mental problems, became an alcoholic and made my life miserable. Subsequently she killed herself (sleeping pills).

Not enough love in the home, the verdict is, and so poor little Truman sought it everywhere else. ("Too much love in the home," I long to write on papers by many undeservedly confident students.)

To obtain that love, the argument runs, Capote's craving for fame, his desire to produce beautiful prose, were all so much sublimation. But to hold such a view is to dishonor the complexities of human character. Life is not, after all, a Barbra Streisand song. People who need people, I have discovered, are not usually the luckiest people at all. And the world—please believe me on this one—needs a hell of a lot more than love, sweet love.

Too Brief a Treat, the title chosen by Gerald Clarke for his edition of Truman Capote's letters, comes from a phrase Capote used to complain of the shortness of a letter sent him by a friend. These letters, scrupulously edited, with exactly the right degree of annotation, are themselves too brief a treat, ending roughly in 1966, though Capote lived on to 1984. The reason they end so early in their author's life is that he no longer needed to write his friends as often, having returned to the United States after living abroad (chiefly in Switzerland, Sicily, Italy, and France). What is more, the success of *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *In Cold Blood* made him a wealthy man and, consequently, one who wrote less and less and drank and doped himself with pills more and more. Success killed Truman Capote, who is thought to have died of a drug overdose, just short of the age of sixty.

The letters begin with young Truman living in New York, publishing stories in the popular women's magazines: "a lad of the world," as he declared himself. Like many good American writers—H.L. Mencken and Ernest Hemingway notable among them—he had taken a pass on college. The literary historian Newton Arvin, biographer of Melville, Hawthorne, and Longfellow, was an early lover, and Capote referred to Arvin, who was twenty-four years older, as his own personal Harvard. But then Capote had one of those quick, osmotic minds, able to pick up, sort out, and make use of everything of interest that came his way. He was smart right out of the gate and, until the end, did not grow dumber.

Today one thinks of Truman Capote, if one thinks of him at all, as the gay consort to the rich women of New York's designer East Side, a party-giver of high power in his own right (the party he gave for Katharine Graham, publisher of the *Washington Post*, at the Plaza Hotel in New York in 1966 was referred to at the time in the press as "the party of the decade"), and a spewer of vicious gossip on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show* (where among other insults he said that *Valley of the Dolls* author Jacqueline Susann looked "like a truck driver in drag").

In fact, until his devastating success Capote was a writer devoted to his craft and astute in his literary judgment. Before James Jones's *From Here to Eternity* was published, he called the book a bad combination of Thomas Wolfe and Norman Mailer yet still predicted its commercial success. To his editor at Random House he knocked Bud Schulberg ("such a small sensibility") and suggested that the firm's Modern Library would do much better to reprint Sarah Orne Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. He much admired Edith Wharton and Willa Cather. He spotted the thinness of Stephen Spender. He called James Baldwin's fiction "crudely written and of a balls-aching boredom," while remarking of Baldwin generally that "he is a mysterious mixture of real talent and real fraud," which is, by my reckoning, a perfect judgment.

A savvy man, Truman Capote, and about nothing was he more savvy than his own career. He cultivated editors and publishers with great care. Applying for a Guggenheim, he arranged for Edith Sitwell and E.M. Forster to write recommendations for him. Once his career was launched, he dropped his agent and handled all business matters—and very cleverly too—on his own. As a craftsman, a pro, he seemed

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able to toss off work in many modes. He wrote two excellent screenplays: *Beat the Devil*, a brilliant spoof of international gangster flicks; and *The Innocents*, a striking adaptation of Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*. "I loathe writing for films," he later wrote to his friend Mary Louise Aswell. "I think the bit I've done so far has done me a certain amount of good, . . . but that is as far as it should go." He was offered the opportunity to write a libretto for an opera by Aaron Copland, but claimed he "couldn't work up the right kind of interest: vanity, I suppose—I kept thinking how Aaron would get all the credit." Quite right, too.

The gossip quotient in *Too Brief a Treat* is splendidly high, and the names pour out at firehose intensity. Through charm Capote insinuated himself with many of the ostensibly most elegant types of his day. If a clanging bell went off every time one of these names were mentioned in these letters, the book would read like a nineteenth-century fire engine. He claims to have given a party to introduce André Gide to Christian Dior; also to have had a dalliance with Montgomery Clift. He knew Humphrey Bogart and John Huston from his work on *Beat the Devil*. Audrey Hepburn, who played Holly Golighty in the movie version of his novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, is a name that comes a-clanging with a fair frequency. "Jackie [Kennedy] et moi spent the whole night talking about sex" isn't a bad little specimen. The Chaplins and Orson Welles get mentioned as do the Agnellis and Niarchoses and W.H. Auden ("such a tiresome old Aunty").

Here is a letter written from Portofino to a friend named Andrew Lyndon, as rich a plumb of name-dropping, with incisive criticisms thrown in at no extra charge, as one is likely to find anywhere:

> I've liked it here and have done a lot of work, but in August [of 1953] everything became too social—and I *do* mean social—the Windsors (morons), the Luces (morons plus), Garbo (looking like death with a suntan), the Oliviers (they let her [Vivien Leigh] out [of an insane asylum]), Daisy Fellowes [heiress to the Singer Sewing Machine fortune] . . . —then Cecil [Beaton] and John Gielgud came to stay with us, and we went to Venice on Arthur Lopez's yacht—whence I've just come back. Oh, yes, I forgot Noel Coward . . .

CORBIS

Charm takes its toll: Capote in New York in 1980.

He used to like to play a game he invented called International Daisy Chain, best attempted, he felt, when drunk. The chain was formed through the connection of people who had had affairs with people who then went on to have affairs with other people: He claimed to have been able to construct one such chain from Cab Calloway to Adolf Hitler.

Referring to a visit from John Gielgud and Cecil Beaton and Noel Coward, Capote writes, "in other words, the whole Lavender Hill mob." The Lavender Hill, or gay, element in *Too Brief a Treat* is strong and generally adds to the amusement of the proceedings. His most candid letters are written to gay friends from his early days in New York. Capote himself preferred living in a homosexual partnership, which he did for much of his life: first with Newton Arvin and then, for more than thirty years, with a novelist named Jack Dunphy. The end of his life was made even more wretched by a violent relationship with a bisexual alcoholic named John O'Shea. He was alert to the comedy, but also the horrors, of the gay cruising life.

One piece of sad news on this front is when Capote's former lover, Newton Arvin, a longtime teacher at Smith College, was caught and exposed as a recipient of homosexual pornography through the mails. He was sentenced to a one-year suspended sentence, had a nervous breakdown, and was removed from his teaching position at Smith. As Gerald Clarke notes, Arvin was only spared serving a prison sentence because of "ratting on two younger gay faculty colleagues . . . who were untenured; both were fired by Smith in 1961."

Capote stood by his old friend, bucking him up, offering him help of every kind: "Well, what's happened has happened; and it has happened to many others—who, like Gielgud, took it in stride and did not let it be the end of the world. All your friends are with you, of that you can be sure; and among them please do not count me least: aside from my affection, which you already have, I will be glad to supply you with money should the need arise. This is a tough experience, to be met with toughness, a calm head, a good lawyer."

One might call the author of the letters in *Too Brief a Treat* Janus-faced, except that in them he wasn't merely two- but really three-faced. There was the face for gay friends, the face for non-gay friends, and the face for

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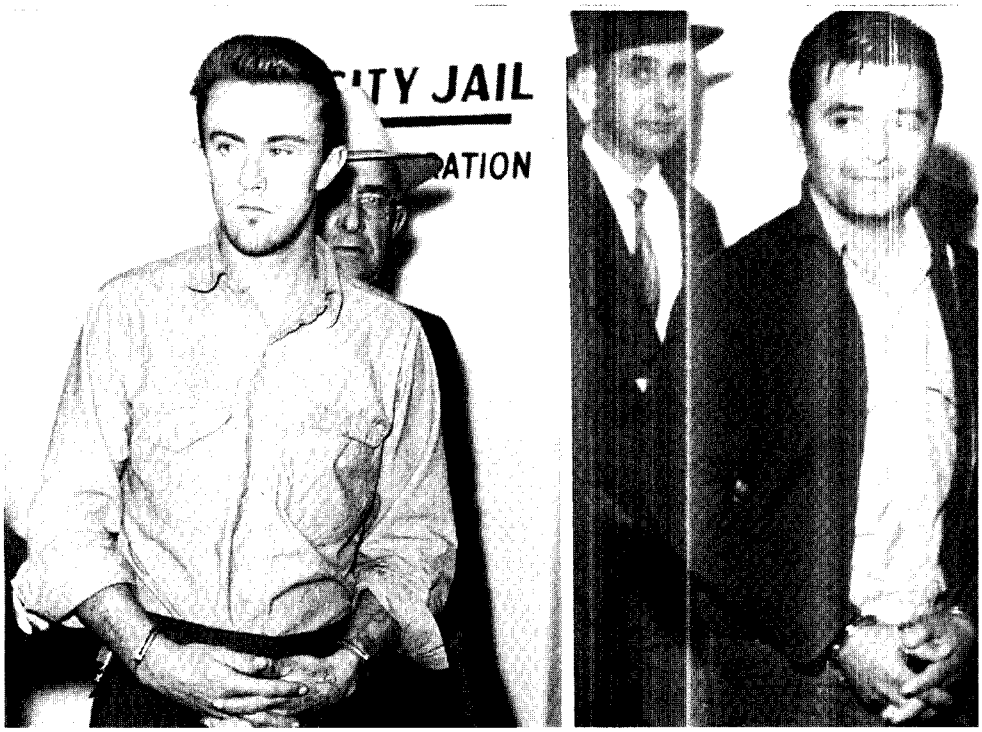

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The "In Cold Blood" killers: Eugene Hickock (left) and Perry Edward Smith (right).

the friends he made in Kansas while writing *In Cold Blood*. As often as not, he is working his non-gay correspondents—the Hollywood producer David O. Selznick, Bennett Cerf, the publisher of Random House, and others—for his own ends.

Especially does this apply to the Dewey family, whose father, Alvin Dewey, was the Kansas Bureau of Investigation officer assigned to the murder of the Cutter family that was the subject of *In Cold Blood*. Capote cultivated this conservative middle-western family in the most sedulous way. He warned friends not to make remarks suggesting the reality of his considerably less than bourgeois life. In an early letter to the Deweys he refers to Jack Dunphy as "a friend who is here living with me," thus disguising his homosexuality. When the Deweys go off to Los Angeles on a holiday, he arranges for David O. Selznick and his wife, the actress Jennifer Jones, to show them around Hollywood.

Whatever his motives, there cannot be much doubt that Capote came genuinely to like the Deweys of Garden City, Kansas, and they him. Psychologists of the Barbra Streisand school have argued that in the Deweys he found the solid family of which he had always been deprived. But in his many letters to them, Capote alternates charm with requests for documents and other information about the Cutter murders and the fate of the murderers. One of the Dewey sons wishes to become a writer, and Capote agrees to read his manuscripts, comments carefully on them, and gives the boy perfectly sound advice on how to go about it. Always a generous gift-giver, he sent the family pleasing presents at every opportunity. He arranged trips for them for which he paid the expenses. But they had more to give him than he could possibly repay: They put him in possession of material for the book that would be the making of him.

Without *In Cold Blood*, Capote's name would probably be forgotten today. Although his fiction is never less than skillful, with the element of charm bordering on sentimentality frequently coming into play in such stories as "The House of Flowers" and "A Christmas Memory," it often feels a touch insubstantial, derivative, fragile, and too brightly colored. When Capote published his first novel, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948), George Davis, an editor of *Mademoiselle* magazine known for his lacerating remarks, said: "I suppose someone had to write the fairy *Huckleberry Finn*."

In Cold Blood took six years to finish. Capote first heard of the murder of the Cutter family when he noticed a story in the *New York Times* of November 16, 1959, with the headline, "Wealthy Farmer, 3 of Family Slain," and he contracted with William Shawn to write about it for the *New Yorker*. From the outset, Capote felt he was sitting on a masterpiece. Complications of various kinds arose, chief among them lengthy appeals that delayed the execution of the two killers for years. A striking piece of hypocrisy in this correspondence is Capote's letters of friendship with the two killers, whom he also pumped for information—set beside letters to others expressing his impatience for their execution, so that he could complete his book at last. Writers, let us make no mistake, are swine.

Several letters in *Too Brief a Treat* make plain Capote's agonizing over the composition of *In Cold Blood*. This is unusual coming from a writer who heretofore made all his writing seem so much skateboarding down a gently descending incline. With this book, though, large nails, potholes, and flaming hurdles are everywhere in his path: "No, I'm finishing the last pages of my book," he writes to Cecil Beaton, "I must get rid of it regardless of what happens. . . . My sanity is at stake—and this is no mere idle phrase. Oh, the hell with it. I shouldn't write such gloomy crap—even to someone as close to me as you are."

When in the autumn of 1965 the first of four installments of *In Cold Blood* began running in the *New Yorker*, its success was greater than even its highly imaginative author could have imagined. The work was one in which no one was permitted not to have an opinion: about its accuracy, its form (which he called "a non-fiction novel"), its power. The book also showed its author's impressive range. Born into southern squalor, hanging out with the vacuous wealthy in Manhattan, Capote could also understand the lives of a strongly Protestant middlewestern farm family as well as those of the two monsters who murdered them. When he was on his game, this little man with the fruity voice didn't miss much.

With book publication, the money came cascading in. Capote was forty.

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He acquired something close to movie-star fame. His face was on the cover of magazines. He was a great draw for the talk shows, not least the *Tonight Show* (Johnny Carson's soon to be ex-wife Joanne was a close friend), where he could be depended upon to say scandalous things about famous contemporaries. As Herbert von Karajan is once supposed to have said when a Parisian cab driver asked him where he wished to go, so now could Truman Capote say: "It doesn't matter. They want me everywhere."

With the success of *In Cold Blood*, the letters in *Too Brief a Treat* begin to peter out, though Capote had nearly twenty years to live. But nothing would ever again excite his literary passion with the same force as *In Cold Blood*. So much that he would publish afterward felt more like make-work than writing in which he was fully engaged. The decline had begun, the fall was fast approaching.

Capote planned, for a final act, to go out as the American Proust with a novel called "Answered Prayers" about the lives of the rich Manhattan women into whose confidence, through his charm, he had insinuated himself. When he published a chapter of the novel with the title "La Côte Basque" in *Esquire* in 1975, so damaging (if perhaps also true) was it to the people who had befriended him that he was ever afterward *non grata* in the chic social circles upon which he had come to depend.

The final decade of Capote's life, as one learns from Gerald Clarke's excellent biography of the writer, was a shambles of drugs and booze and law suits and ugly gossip and betrayals perpetrated both upon him and by him. This once delicately beautiful and richly talented young man became a talk-show buffoon, a booze-bloated bag of neediness, the subject of *New York Post* gossip headlines, and one of the first victims of the celebrity culture he had helped to create. It's a sad story—made sadder by the fact that he did not retain the lucidity to write it himself. Its theme might have been that charm is a gift that, when abused, can bring a man down hard. ♦

Balanchine's Stage

Terry Teachout on how we tell the dancer from the dance. **BY JUDITH GELERNTER**

George Balanchine considered his ballets ephemeral: "A breath, a memory, then gone." He worked hard in the moment and, following a near fatal illness in his youth, for the moment, so it is easy to understand his dismissive "when I die, everything should vanish."

But, in fact, much of his work remains. As Terry Teachout shows in his brief life of Balanchine, *All in the Dances*, dance companies around the world are still performing his work. This year, to honor the centennial of his birth, ballets have been staged at home and abroad, often by graduates of the School of American Ballet, which he helped found. Many will continue to be seen live at Lincoln Center's State Theater, because they remain in the repetoire of the New York City Ballet. Some have been recorded and may be seen at the Performing Arts Library at Lincoln Center, while others are commercially available on videotape and DVD.

All in the Dances
A Brief Life of George Balanchine
by Terry Teachout
Harcourt, 208 pp., $22

And yet, though his ballets flourish, the man himself seems to be growing increasingly obscure. Balanchine neared celebrity status around mid-century when he was featured in a *New Yorker* profile and on a *Time* magazine cover, and when an excerpt from one of his ballets was featured on the *Ed Sullivan Show*. But survey results recently presented to the NYCB board of directors show that 85 percent of New Yorkers under age thirty-nine have never heard of George Balanchine.

All in the Dances is in a position to return Balanchine to the spotlight. Teachout's biography includes all the essentials: Balanchine's parents' musicality, his childhood music and dance training, his method of working, how he conducted himself with students in class and with particular dancers, what he considered his best ballet, and how he viewed his adopted country of America. The text modulates between public and private life without drowning us in irrelevancies and deepens our insight by quoting comments by the man and those who knew him.

The biography, though brief, makes a contribution to the literature. Teachout, who was just named to the National Council on the Arts, does not overturn many of the standard interpretations found in the 1988 biography by Richard Buckle and John Taras or the monograph, updated in 1983, by Taper. Instead, he distills countries, companies, artists, and ballets to leave a clear picture of a complex life.

Adulation for a genius is apparent throughout *All in the Dances*. To maintain this tone, certain unpleasant behaviors are hushed, glossing over Balanchine's illness and divorce tragedy with his last wife. Treating him as a great man, the book holds Balanchine at a distance. Curiously, he did not think of himself as a great man. He thought of himself as a man in the dance trade and compared himself to a cook or a carpenter. He disliked the word "create" in relation to his ballets. In his words, "only God creates; I assemble." Many of his students and friends affectionately called him "Mr. B."

The casual reader of this vibrant narrative will absorb the notion that Balanchine was a master but might be left guessing exactly why he was considered as such. That ambiguity runs through

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Harcourt

George Balanchine instructs a dancer.

the literature. The first sentence of Don McDonough's 1983 work reads: "The exact nature of his contribution remains elusive even in the minds of many of his admirers."

But Balanchine understood his contribution. It was innovation. The first program of the young choreographer, entitled "The Evolution of Ballet: From Petipa through Fokine to Balanchivadze," is less "smile-making," as Teachout puts it, than revealing. It shows that Balanchine knew where he fit in the choreographic succession.

Balanchine was schooled in St. Petersburg, the seat of the ballet tradition. The ballet center had been transferred from the French courts when the tsars imported highly trained French dancers such as the choreographer Petipa of *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Nutcracker* fame.

Petipa's imperial ballets were performed in sumptuous romantic style with fantastic or fairy tale plots, expressive gesture, strict ballet vocabulary, and lavish costumes and scenery. Fokine, a Russian of the next generation, danced in Petipa ballets and introduced changes in the formula when creating his own. He made some abstract ballets that were structured more along the lines of the music than the plot. In 1939, some time after Fokine had been working in America, a *New York Herald Tribune* critic referred to him as "the world's most famous choreographer of ballets." Balanchine trained at the school of the Imperial Theater and danced in ballets by Petipa and Fokine. What he did not know at that time was that his career, just like Fokine's, would take him to the Ballets Russes in Paris (where he too frenchified his name), and then to America.

What Balanchine wrote in his youth in the program title shows a grasp of his own creative potential. It may not have been until his mid-twenties that he recognized what direction his creativity would take. That recognition probably came with his *Apollon Musagète* of 1928. He called this ballet a turning point because he first realized that he could clarify by limiting. American audiences absorbed his ideas gradually, as demonstrated by the decades of mixed reviews, but winds shifted more firmly in his favor by mid-century. It was not the original 1946 *Four Temperaments* with modernized ballet vocabulary, but the 1951 version, with décor and costumes stripped away, that was called a "landmark." He was to continue the Petipa–Fokine succession by moving ballet away from lavish theatricality and toward pure movement.

Balanchine retained the classical vocabulary, tending to push steps in tempo or execution to the limit of dancers' technique, and he added his own sometimes angular movement, while reducing set, staging, and costume to arrive at a cool correspondence between music and movement. This was new classicism in dance. Balanchine was the first to realize in dance the equivalent of what Hindemith, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky set in concert music.

Not every mature Balanchine ballet is neoclassical. His *Nutcracker*, for example, revived a romantic two-act extravaganza, though the resulting ballet did not appeal to him. "Everybody always asks why do I want to do *Nutcracker*. . . . It's not that I *want* to. It's my business to make repertoire. My approach to the theater—to ballet—is to entertain the public." To be sure, Balanchine did please the public, and *Nutcracker* has become a staple of the New York City Ballet. Similarly, his *Midsummer Night's Dream*, with its classical vocabulary, sets, and sumptuous costumes, is firmly rooted in ballet tradition. Earlier in the century, Fokine made a ballet of the same title.

All in the Dances concludes with some uncertainty as to the future of Balanchine's neoclassical ballets, quoting the British choreographer Frederick Ashton, who "feared for the future" of Balanchine's plotless ballets. But Ashton and Balanchine were known during their lives to harbor mutual contempt, and the future may be rosier than Teachout worries.

Balanchine once replied to a journalist who asked him to sum up his life: "It's all in the programs." He probably would prefer that we remember him as a choreographer coaching dancers—the Balanchine whose picture is on the book's back cover. Teachout aims instead at the heroic figure—the Balanchine as portrayed on the book's front cover. Those who want to learn about the man and his times should use Teachout's *All in the Dance* as a supplement to viewing Balanchine's ballets. But, in the end, it isn't by reading but by looking that we can judge the extent of his mastery of the movement art. ♦

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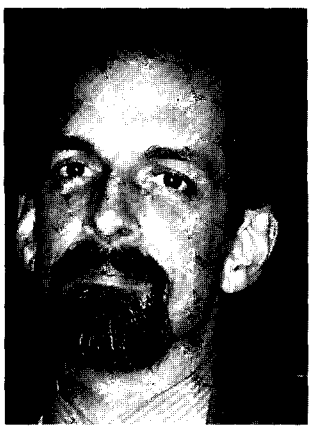
Back to the Baroque

Neal Stephenson's science fiction of the past.

BY GLENN HARLAN REYNOLDS

Over the past year or so, Neal Stephenson has produced a minor miracle: not one, but three best-selling nine-hundred-page novels, all focused on obscure topics of cryptography, monetary theory, and philosophy. Eschewing word processing, he wrote them with a fountain pen—in order, he said, to get himself into the mindset of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the eras in which the books are set.

After publishing the cult-classic *The Big U* and the thrillers *Zodiac* and *Snow Crash*, Stephenson emerged as a major force in 1995 with the publication of *The Diamond Age*, a novel best known for its sophisticated treatment of nanotechnology. Stephenson is a geek, and—like all of us geeks—he loves gizmos. But he understands that human beings and human ideas are what drive events. And the *truly* revolutionary technology driving *The Diamond Age* involves a device for providing widespread academic and moral education to young girls.



Quicksilver
The Baroque Cycle
Volume I
by Neal Stephenson
William Morrow, 944 pp., $27.95

The Confusion
The Baroque Cycle
Volume II
by Neal Stephenson
William Morrow, 816 pp., $27.95

The System of the World
The Baroque Cycle
Volume III
by Neal Stephenson
William Morrow, 892 pp., $27.95

Stephenson's most famous novel, the 1999 blockbuster *Cryptonomicon*, stayed true to this point, too, though geeky readers often missed that message amid episodes of hacking, codebreaking, and van Eck phreaking. Unlike some of his science-fictional predecessors (Robert Heinlein, for example), Stephenson is never preachy. And this subtlety has led some Stephenson fans to miss the point of the "Baroque Cycle," his new trilogy of *Quicksilver*, *The Confusion*, and *The System of the World*. But although science and technology play an important role in these stories—something hard to avoid when the major characters include Leibniz, Hooke, and Newton—the story is again ultimately about people and society.

In fact, the clue to the whole series is found in a passage two-thirds through the last book: "It has been my view for some years that a new System of the World is being created around us. I used to suppose that it would drive out and annihilate any older Systems. But things I have seen recently . . . have convinced me that new Systems never replace old ones, but only surround and encapsulate them. . . . And so I say that Alchemy shall not vanish, as I always hoped. Rather, it shall be encapsulated within the new System of the World."

The theme of the three books—and of the new System of the World that is emerging within them—is the power of money and information, and the overlap between the two. At one point, the character Daniel Waterhouse observes: "The place was after all a Market, not a Palace, Parliament, College, or Church. Markets drew a particular sort of person, just as those other places drew different sorts. And the sorts who found a market a congenial and rewarding place to be, were those who thought quickly on their feet, and adapted to unlooked-for happenings with facility; they were, in a word, mercurial. The driver of that coal-cart had perhaps ten seconds in which to make up his mind what he ought to do. Yet he had decided. And probably rightly."

Throughout the three books, we see feudalism dying, and markets and information growing in power, while people try in various ways to cope with the changes this process produces. It is, in short, a period not so different from the present. That's a point that Stephenson emphasized when I interviewed him: "What I found interesting on a political level was that the Cromwell types were pushing a bunch of ideas that struck people as nuts at the time, but that are bedrock principles of modern society—things like free enterprise and separation of church and state and limited government that took years to actually achieve. Many of the people called Puritans were small businessmen and independent traders. They had a real bent toward free enterprise, and they developed a real resentment of government and taxes—as a result, they were free traders. It's like what we see with a lot of pro-business people today."

Stephenson's trilogy explores the difficulties of bringing new and more-liberal ways to religious nuts, but also illustrates that those religious nuts know things, and possess spiritual and material advantages, that their more urbane contemporaries do not.

Stephenson has gotten some flak from people who were expecting

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another *Cryptonomicon*, only set in the seventeenth century. And, in fact, although these books constitute a sort of prequel to *Cryptonomicon*, with characters and ancestors of characters overlapping, they are very different.

Cryptonomicon was still a book for science-fiction readers; the Baroque Cycle, and in particular its final volume, *The System of the World*, is not so much *for* geeks as *about* geeks. Leibniz, Newton, Hooke, Boyle—they're geeks to a man. But they're premodern geeks: geeks with a strong interest in matters spiritual as well as technical; geeks who, in fact, don't really draw a very firm line between the two subjects. Newton's fascination with alchemy is well known, of course, but Stephenson makes it clear just how much Newton was a man of his times in this respect.

Stephenson's style is a bit windy in places, and especially in the opening chapters of the third book. The descriptions are lengthy and detailed, with a simple walk through London taking up many pages. The conversations are involved and intricate, as the characters discuss and debate issues. Those who have read eighteenth-century novels will find both aspects familiar, while those who are expecting Hemingway will find something that's, well, not much like Hemingway. I found Stephenson's lengthy descriptions and interludes interesting and didn't mind that they slowed the plot from time to time.

The Baroque Cycle has its exciting parts—such as Isaac Newton trying to defuse a ticking time bomb while adrift in the North Sea, and warfare in Europe and Ireland—but it doesn't offer the fast-paced action of other recent books set in the same general period, such as Eric Flint's *1632*. But Stephenson is aiming higher and deeper. His characters and the world they inhabit are grappling with questions of faith. Newton's interest in alchemy isn't truly occult; he thinks that it's another way to understand the mind of God. And Princess Caroline, who works hard to reconcile Newton with Leibniz, sees the reconciliation of faith and science as even more important. Without it, she argues, the new system will be doomed, something she illustrates quite dramatically by setting a globe of the earth alight.

One cannot help but feel, after reading the long passage in which the princess, Newton, and Leibniz discuss the matter, that things did not work out as well as they might have. Stephenson's novels address topics that remain the burning issues of our age. And they do so in a highly entertaining fashion. So long as you are not expecting *Cryptonomicon* all over again, you'll find Stephenson's Baroque Cycle one of the great reads of the year. ♦

Democracy Defended

Natan Sharansky explains why democracy makes the world safer. **BY MEYRAV WURMSER**

Natan Sharansky, one of the great champions of human rights, personifies freedom's victory over tyranny. Before immigrating to Israel and becoming a prominent politician, he was one of the best-known leaders of the dissident movement in the Soviet Union and an advocate of the cause of Soviet Jewry. Convicted of treason in 1978, he was sent to the Gulag, where he stayed until Mikhail Gorbachev released him in 1986.

The Case for Democracy
The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror
by Natan Sharansky
Public Affairs, 303 pp., $26.95

His book *The Case for Democracy: The Power of Freedom to Overcome Tyranny and Terror* reads at once as a warm, personal account and a dispassionately analytical treatise. Its title is its theme: How can freedom overcome tyranny and bring security and peace?

Sharansky builds his argument like a mathematical equation. First, he divides the world between "free" and "fear" societies. Then he employs a simple test to discern a free society from a society based on fear: Can one enter a public square and express any opinion without fear of being arrested? If not, one is in a society that runs on fear.

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Then, he describes the mechanics of fear societies, focusing on three basic groups: true believers, doublethinkers, and dissidents. Sharansky uses personal anecdotes to demonstrate what these categories mean, and to describe, for readers who have lived only in free societies, the experience of living in a fear society. He admits that he was, like most of the Soviet population, a doublethinker, constantly performing a balancing act between his true feelings and his public feelings. As a child, he privately celebrated Stalin's death, and then joined the public expressions of mourning and praise.

Only those adept at reading these mechanics, Sharansky warns, can tell the true believers from the doublethinkers. Most outsiders mistakenly accept the popularity of despotic states because these regimes spend great effort trying to conceal the difference between their true believers and doublethinkers. The failure to see the difference between the two, however, is not just a question of political acumen, it is a question of moral clarity.

Sharansky then analyzes the inherent instability of fear societies. Their leaders lack popular support, and, over time, they lose true believers. So the regime must work harder to hold onto power. To prop itself up, the regime

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needs an external enemy, who serves a dual, if not contradictory, purpose. Because the fear society stifles creative thought, it lacks scientific and technological progress, and so must mimic those of its rival. It also uses the rival as the scapegoat for its own political malaise. By contrast, governments of free societies are accountable to the will of the people and the laws of their country. A democratic leader who pursues a reckless agenda cannot do so indefinitely.

Sharansky explains how freedom can guide free societies in their dealings with fear societies. He does so by raising three questions: Is freedom from tyranny universally desired? Is pursuing that goal universally desirable? And can it be done, even if imposing it on a nation is required?

Discussing the United States's role in the world, he responds to criticisms of so-called realists from both the left and right who believe that America's foreign policy should be guided only by interests—and not by ideals. He rejects the notion that certain cultures are incompatible with democracy. Exporting freedom to these societies, he argues, is moral since it helps oppressed people obtain basic liberties. But it is also pragmatic, because democratic societies tend to resolve their differences peacefully.

AP Photo / Misha Japaridze

Sharansky in Moscow, 1997: his first time in Russia after leaving in a 1986 prisoner exchange.

Sharansky advocates the use of well-calculated international pressure against tyrannies. In the Middle East, the dictatorships may be vehemently anti-American, but the people tend to favor the West. The West can influence undemocratic and anti-American regimes such as Iran's, Saudi Arabia's, and Syria's by insisting that their people enjoy some basic freedoms. The freedom deficit in the Arab world, argues Sharansky, does not mean that Arabs do not strive for freedom. The desire for liberty is universal and beats even in Arab hearts.

In fact, says Sharansky, the West's tendency not to challenge the tyrannies that govern the Middle East is partly to blame for the scarcity of freedom in the Arab world. The realist pursuit of stability led certain American administrations to endorse some of the world's darkest oppressors. The futile Oslo process serves as a glaring example of the failure to bring peace when freedom is ignored. The West mistakenly sought to strengthen Yasser Arafat in the hopes that he would control his people and make peace with Israel. But embracing a corrupt dictator in the name of stability only served to oppress the Palestinians and undermine Israel's peace and security.

Sharansky's book, written prior to Arafat's death, is optimistic about the prospects for Palestinian freedom. He makes reference to Omar Karsou, a Palestinian dissident and voice for freedom. While admitting the differences of opinion between himself and Karsou—who does not believe in the Jewish people's historic right to the land of Israel—Sharansky nevertheless argues that democrats like Karsou are better partners for peaceful coexistence than was Arafat. Under the dictatorial rule of Arafat, all grievances were deflected toward Israel.

Even when former Israeli premier Barak offered an unprecedented territorial compromise, Arafat had to reject it and renew the intifada for fear that his people would challenge his rule after a settlement. Democrats like Karsou, Sharansky insists, would not endorse violent struggle to maintain their power.

President Bush recently met with Sharansky and carefully read his book. Rumor also has it that the president asked his newly appointed secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, to read the book as well. This means that a former Soviet dissident and one of the great champions of freedom is now influencing the thinking of the most powerful man in the world. Dictators everywhere, take note. ♦

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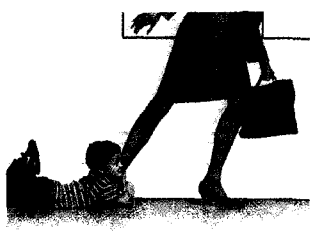
Life Without Father

. . . or mother, for that matter. Mary Eberstadt on the way we live now. **BY SUSIE CURRIE**

In September, Florida mother Dakeysha Lee left her two-year-old daughter alone in her apartment while she began a jail sentence. The child was found nineteen days later by her father—naked, caked with dried ketchup and mustard, and watching television in her mother's bedroom. She had apparently clawed the labels off canned goods and subsisted on toilet water, condiments, brownie mix, and dry macaroni. Lee, who was serving time for brandishing a box cutter and attempting to steal $200, received eighteen months probation for leaving her toddler to her own devices for nearly three weeks.



HOME-ALONE AMERICA

The Hidden Toll of Day Care, Behavioral Drugs, and Other Parent Substitutes

Mary Eberstadt

Home-Alone America
The Hidden Toll of Day Care, Behavioral Drugs, and Other Parent Substitutes
by Mary Eberstadt
Sentinel, 218 pp., $25.95

CBS News's headline a few days after the child was hospitalized for dehydration and malnutrition was "Home-Alone Tot in Good Shape." If headline writers can put a happy face on a story like that, imagine what they can do to less dramatic stories of absent parents.

Remember when we were told how great it is that day-care babies develop hardier immune systems than their stay-at-home counterparts—from getting sick twice as often? Or how, when another study showed increased aggression in children who spent the most time away from their parents, reporters lauded the youngsters' independent streaks, honed in the fires of early socialization?

Mary Eberstadt's cogent new book, *Home-Alone America*, goes way beyond the headlines to show the effects of absent parents on nearly every area of children's lives. The reality, she contends, is that the ever-greater outsourcing of child rearing has led to children who are sadder, angrier, fatter, sicker (with everything from common colds to life-threatening sexually transmitted diseases), and more psychotropically medicated than any generation in history. Throughout the book, she challenges the spurious causes that doctors, experts, and other allegedly responsible adults almost frantically posit when faced with mountains of evidence that all leading indicators of children's health and behavior are continuing their southward slump.

Their position seems to be that no matter what disorder is manifesting itself, a contributing factor cannot be the way American children are being reared. Is your child obese? Must be in his genes. Biting everyone in preschool? Kids will be kids. Disobedient? He has either Oppositional Defiance Disorder or Auditory Processing Delay. Never heard of them? Oh, well, that's because we just discovered them. What he needs is a good prescription.

Eberstadt's well-documented work takes a different tack. It grabs us by the collar and forces us to look at the fruit that has sprung from the seeds of thirty-year-old twin social experiments: two-career families (resulting in absent mothers) and easy divorces (resulting in absent fathers).

Some of the fruit is bitter indeed, such as the rising demand for both round-the-clock child-care centers and boarding schools that specialize in adolescent "behavior modification"—by, in some cases, pushing the blindfolded child off a bridge into a river at night. The students at these institutions are not addicts or criminals; in fact, they couldn't get in if they were. An administrator estimated that 70 percent of the residents at one such school were there because they "cannot communicate at home."

They do communicate, though, through their music. In a fascinating chapter on "The Primal Scream of Teenage Music," Eberstadt wades through the fetid heavy-metal/hip-hop swamp of profanity and misogyny and finds common themes such as parental divorce and absent fathers.

Papa Roach's "Broken Home," Blink 182's "Stay Together for the Kids," and Snoop Doggy Dogg and Soulja Slim's "Mama Raised Me" are just a few of the examples she cites, complete with plaintive lyrics that might have been lifted from a troubled grade-schooler's diary. (If, that is, the youth could string together enough four-letter words.) The late Tupac Shakur raps about having to play catch by himself. Even the execrable Eminem excoriates today's parents for ignoring and overmedicating their children.

Eberstadt produces abundant evidence in her chapter on "wonder drugs" that the controversial rapper has a point. Preschoolers' prescriptions for selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors used to treat anxiety and depression increased tenfold in four years. Ritalin production increased more than 700 percent between 1990 and 2000. And her chapter on mental health wonders why the blame for children's deteriorating behavior is being laid squarely at their little feet. There are dozens of new criteria for the alphabet soup of newly discovered children's mental health

Susie Currie is a mother and housewife in Maryland.

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problems, but nothing pertaining to parental behavior. Why no Preoccupied Parent Syndrome or Separation Non-anxiety Disorder, which Dakeysha Lee clearly exhibits?

Eberstadt, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution (and contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD), is sure to be castigated by all the usual feminist suspects. That's a shame, because what she is *not* advocating is firing all women so they can go tend their offspring. She recognizes that every family has a different situation and resources, and a one-size-fits-all solution can't possibly apply to everyone.

Instead, she wants us to see that all of us—parents, children, and society as a whole—would be better off if more parents were more available. Just having an adult in the house makes it harder for both the children who live there and the ones who visit to give full rein to their appetites, whether for sex or snacks.

If Eberstadt can at least get us to admit that day care and empty afternoon houses are not the ideal, maybe we can quit kidding ourselves that we're doing it for the kids. For many children, that would be the best Christmas present ever. ♦

The Nature of America

Richard Rhodes gives a bird's-eye view of John James Audubon. **BY ROBERT FINCH**

Somehow, we always think of the Founding Fathers as, if not old, then at least august. But John James Audubon, born in 1785, belongs to the next moment in American history. He exists on the early frontier with those other half-mythical action-figures: Boone, Crockett, Lewis and Clark. Audubon's generation exemplified the brash optimism, untested energy, and above all the youth of the new nation that was just beginning to find its identity. It was no country for old men: In 1810 the median age in the United States was sixteen, and in 1820 56 percent of Americans were under twenty.

John James Audubon
The Making of an American
by Richard Rhodes
Knopf, 514 pp., $30

Robert Finch is the author of five collections of essays, most recently Death of a Hornet and Other Cape Cod Essays, *and is coeditor of* The Norton Book of Nature Writing.

Richard Rhodes has fully captured the spirit of this era in *John James Audubon: The Making of an American*. Rhodes is the author of twenty books of nonfiction, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, and his superb new biography should garner a second Pulitzer. *John James Audubon* is a study of that moment, during the first great western movement across the Appalachians, when "we began to call ourselves Americans" and the pioneers created the individualism that became so central to our national character.

Audubon was in some ways different from other representatives of his formative generation. He was a non-English foreigner, the Haitian-born illegitimate son of a French landowner and a chambermaid, reared and educated in France. He arrived in the United States in 1803 at the age of eighteen, not so much seeking fame, fortune, or political freedom as fleeing the threat of conscription in Napoleon's army.

But he certainly embodies a quintessential element of the American character: self-reinvention. Rhodes begins *John James Audubon* with his hero in an archetypal pose: stepping off a ship in New York Harbor, filled with limitless hope, ambition, and self-confidence. In that moment his past—his bastardy, his traumatic experiences of the Terror in Revolutionary France, his "macaronic French-English"—ceased to matter. He would be what he could make of himself, the core of the American credo.

Audubon was, by all accounts, an "immensely likeable" man, handsome with long chestnut hair, an accomplished dancer and fencing master, a crack shot and horse rider, and, for one with such enormous native talent, rather modest in the face of praise. And, oh yes, he painted birds—not exactly a representative occupation in early nineteenth-century North America. In short, Audubon was a classic American mix of Old and New Worlds. He quickly made himself agreeable to Philadelphia society, won the heart of Lucy Bakewell, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, improved his English, and by 1811 set off with his new wife down the Ohio River to set himself up as a mill-owner and merchant of firearms in the frontier Kentucky settlements of Louisville and Henderson.

To Audubon, and to the thousands of others who made that journey down the Ohio in the early 1800s, it was a land of unbounded opportunity and limitless resources. Audubon's journals and correspondence from those early years on the frontier have the feel of an Edenic epic. The casualness with which he records the abundance of such now rare and extinct species as ivory-billed woodpeckers, Carolina parakeets, passenger pigeons, and red-cockaded woodpeckers conveys the fecundity of America's original wildlife more forcefully than any statistic could.

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Audubon's painting of a wild turkey.

Audubon's stories also reflect the rough-and-tumble, often lawless life of the frontier. At one point he was attacked by a "river pilot," whose skull Audubon fractured with an oar, leaving a dent "about the size of a silver dollar." A local doctor was called for who drilled into the skull and "popped out the fracture with the skill of a coachmaker popping out a dent in sheet metal."

Even the verifiable facts of his life give the feeling of a tall tale: everything and everyone larger than life size. But that is exactly Audubon's appeal, from his legendary marksmanship to his unshakeable self-confidence to his staggering ambition to produce, single-handedly, a work depicting all of the known birds of North America "from life" and in life-size dimensions.

But that was later. Until he was nearly thirty-five, Audubon regarded his painting as an avocation. Like most Americans of his age, he aspired to succeed in business, after which he might further indulge his artistic inclinations. Even in those early days on the frontier, however, enterprise required capital, and when the fledgling national banks called in their notes to pay off the balance of the Louisiana Purchase, it sparked the Panic of 1819, during which 80 percent of businesses along the frontier, including Audubon's, went bankrupt. Audubon's failure at Henderson, and the debts he incurred there, dogged him and fed self-doubts for decades afterwards. And yet, having spent five years trying to establish himself as a businessman and failing, he decided to give himself, at last, to his obsession with painting birds and to an unreserved, make-or-break attempt to publish a complete and life-size catalogue of the new continent's avifauna.

One of the achievements of Rhodes's biography is to give us a more complete and complex portrait of Audubon than any previous biography. No mere hagiography, it is full of the contradictions, inconsistencies, false starts and setbacks, pettiness, misunderstandings, and fortuitous events that weave into the life of any real character, even a life of genius. Audubon, like most Kentucky landowners, owned slaves, which Rhodes calls "a moral luxury that hardship would eventually humble and reverse." He consistently admired the Indians' "heroism" and expressed deep sorrow at the removal of the Creeks and Seminoles in the 1830s. A democrat by temperament who castigated the American obsession with outward show of status, he was quite vain about his own personal appearance. Though always conscious of and usually careful with finances, he could impulsively spend $9,400 on matching watches for himself and Lucy.

Audubon was not without great passion and self-confidence, but for a man of such enormous talent and personal appeal he was curiously without ego. Perhaps the dubious circumstances of his birth and social standing reined in his estimation of himself, but certainly an important governor of excessive pride was his strong acknowledgment of the invaluable support, both emotional and practical, that he received for forty-three years from his wife. If

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this book were nothing else, it would be a moving account of one of the great love stories in American history.

Lucy Audubon has been traditionally portrayed as the long-suffering wife and only parent to the couple's children, set against the image of Audubon as absent husband, failed businessman, and irresponsible wilderness wanderer, neglectful of all but his art. But in Rhodes's version Lucy emerges as a match for her husband in almost every way and a full partner in Audubon's achievement. She shared his love of music and the outdoors, taking daily swims with him across the half-mile-wide Ohio. She coped better than most pioneer women did with the hardships and deprivations of frontier life, losing two of their four children at an early age. And she supported him morally, emotionally, psychologically, and financially.

Not the least of Audubon's resources was his ability to learn and work fast. He was, Rhodes says, a "quick study." Fortunately for his biographers, Audubon not only drew and painted quickly and copiously, he also wrote profusely—in journals, letters, and later on, in deliberate narratives of his adventures. Moreover, he was apparently a fairly accurate observer of his own life (though not always an accurate presenter—he tended to embellish and even invent large portions of his autobiography).

On the surface, Rhodes appears to tell Audubon's story largely through Audubon's own words and those of his family and friends, using only documented facts and known historical events. But just below the surface of restrained, objective, fact-based narrative, the writing is bursting with commentary, observation, and conclusion. Rhodes's opinions and personality rarely intrude overtly; rather they are subtly everywhere in the choice, arrangement, and presentation of his material.

When as narrator he does step forth, it is with such broad, informed, common-sense insight that one wishes he had done so more frequently. For instance, though Audubon was a failure in his Kentucky commercial enterprises, Rhodes points out that he showed acute business acumen in pursuing and promoting the publication of his art. (At one point, realizing he needed to go to England to find a printer, he raised $17,000 from dancing lessons.)

All photos: Knopf.

Audubon's fish hawk.

Rhodes is particularly good in his defense of Audubon's status as the patron saint of the American conservation movement. Simple-minded contrarians never seem to tire of pointing out that the namesake of the National Audubon Society was an avid hunter who usually shot his subjects before drawing them. Nor did Audubon ever try to hide this. Nearly every contemporary portrait we have shows him holding a rifle. Moreover, some of

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Audubon's practices are quite disturbing, even by the standards of the age, such as his bizarre attempts to kill a captured golden eagle to mount for painting. (After several failed attempts, including trying to suffocate it with burning charcoal, Audubon finally dispatched the bird by piercing its heart with a long needle.)

In the face of such reprehensible (by present standards) behavior, it is not sufficient to retort that Audubon was simply following the practice of naturalists before the development of binoculars, when, in order to carefully observe a bird, it was necessary to collect it. Nor is it enough to point out, as Rhodes does, that "Audubon engaged birds with the intensity (and sometimes the ferocity) of a hunter because hunting was the cultural frame out of which his encounters with birds emerged," and "to argue that he should have known better is anachronistic and nostalgic," true as that may be. We rightfully demand more than "normal" and "acceptable" behavior from our secular saints. We require that they transcend their age and lead it forward.

What Rhodes also shows us is that Audubon, although never a crusader, was a man peculiarly alert to his environment and therefore unusually sensitive to the depredation being wreaked on the frontier wilderness, as well as prescient and cautionary about its future. In 1822, far ahead of his time, he warned farmers about overtilling their soil without replenishing its nutrients and defended songbirds, which occasionally took cultivated fruit, for their usefulness in controlling insect pests.

Audubon was also one of the first to recognize that North America's seemingly inexhaustible store of wildlife was finite. Appalled at the wanton collection of seabird eggs on the Labrador coast, he predicted the destruction of these vast avian colonies. (The Great Auk would become extinct a decade later.) He chronicled the enormous changes that had occurred in his beloved Ohio River Valley in the two decades since he had first encountered its wilderness in 1811, and, in perhaps the first environmental jeremiad ever penned in this country, he foresaw the destruction of the American primeval: "Neither this little stream, this swamp, this grand sheet of flowing water, nor these mountains will be seen in a century hence as I see them now. . . . Scarce a magnolia will Louisiana possess. The timid deer will exist no more. Fishes will no longer bask on the surface, the eagle will scarce ever alight, and these millions of songsters will be drove away by man." In his meditations on his desire to paint birds, he inadvertently gives expression to the conflict at the core of Western culture's relationship with nature. With a child's natural avarice, he says, "I wished to possess all the productions of nature, but I wished life with them. This was impossible."

Of course, no one reads a biography of Audubon to learn of his skills as a woodsman or a businessman, to understand his complex relationship with his wife, or to see how he was representative of his age or prefigured its environmental conscience. Without *The Birds of America*, Audubon would have been merely a minor figure in early American painting, a little-known nature writer, and a colorful subject for an historical journal.

The monumental five-volume, double-elephant folio of *The Birds of America* remains arguably the most influential work of art this country has ever produced. Audubon's technique of mounting, sketching, and dramatizing his subjects "from life" was revolutionary (most avian portraits in his time were done as rather wooden profiles, illustrations rather than paintings). But he also put the stamp of his personality on the drawings as indelibly and unmistakably as Beethoven's is on his symphonies.

Looking at Audubon's paintings, we realize they simply could not have been made by any other artist, and it is precisely why this is so that previous biographies and studies of Audubon do not—perhaps cannot—explain.

When biographies or Hollywood biopics attempt to dramatize artistic "breakthroughs" or epiphanies (think of Irving Stone's *The Agony and the Ecstasy* or the recent film *Pollock*), they always seem metaphoric, if not downright silly. Rhodes avoids the fallacy of the artistic epiphany, recognizing that Audubon's genius was a seed that flowered gradually, watered mostly by the persistence and perspiration and aided by ambition, self-belief, luck, and the unwavering support of his wife.

Even in the book's vivid account of the *annus mirabilis* of 1820, when Audubon made his pivotal trip down the Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans, gathering and painting specimens in a fever of output—a period when, as Rhodes says, he came into his own as a "mature artist"—there is no dramatic breakthrough. Audubon is simply ready, after twenty years of self-taught apprenticeship, to give himself fully and unreservedly to his art, come what may.

Rhodes rarely brings his considerable analytic and interpretive skills to the paintings themselves. He does, however, advance one provocative theory that is intended to explain the origins of Audubon's singular art, but which also inadvertently helps to illuminate its nature. Rhodes believes Audubon's obsession with birds and his need to reproduce them stemmed from his experience as a child of the French Terror, during which his family was threatened with death and he was surrounded by the seemingly wanton violence and destruction of human life. Thus, Rhodes asserts, "a desire literally to revivify the dead lay at the heart of the boy's struggles to learn to draw birds in lifelike attitudes."

Despite its whiff of pop-psychology, this seems to be bolstered by many of Audubon's own statements. Moreover, though Rhodes does not make the connection explicit, it helps to explain the pervasive *strangeness* of his art, that curious, pervasive element of violence explicit and inherent in much of Audubon's greatest work.

Audubon's most powerful compositions (with a few exceptions, such as the regal wild turkey cock and the incomparable bursting galaxy of Carolina parakeets) are his depictions of

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avian predators and their prey. There is something undeniably grotesque and slightly distorted about these paintings, particularly the raptors. His peregrine falcons are wild-eyed, winged hounds of hell, dripping with blood from the ripped breast of their prey and staring out at the observer in impersonal defiance. His red-tailed hawks are splay-footed demons, harrowing and upstaging the purported subject of his bob white quail painting. His golden eagle hovers uncannily in mid-air on folded wings, one of its talons gratuitously piercing the bleeding eye of the white arctic hare in its grip. His snowy owls are moonlight apparitions rather than real birds. Even his Canada goose, among the more bovine of our waterfowl, has an oddly contorted neck, which, with its long, protruding pink tongue, gives it a serpentine look, while its mate, half-concealed in the dark of a cave-like bower, seems to be piercing the abdomen of the other's belly with its beak.

Audubon was frequently criticized for these "unnatural" and "extreme" representations, though he claimed that he personally observed every behavior he drew, and later ornithologists have confirmed his observations. But though his "life poses" may be literally factual, they are also histrionic, extreme, and expressionist in style. They may be, as Rhodes insists, "reanimations" of dead things, but if so, they are, like Frankensteinian corpses, reanimated *slightly wrong.*

Perhaps the distortion arises partly from his method of posing, which was basically to impale his dead specimens on a pattern of spikes protruding from a gridded board. The poses may have been "life-like," but the birds assuredly were not. As dead weights they would surely have slumped, giving a distended and distorted appearance. The effect would have been most pronounced in the larger birds, raptors and the larger waterfowl, particularly when Audubon attempted to show them in the posture of flight.

Regardless, Audubon seems to have reveled in his paintings' dramatic and gory elements. In this sense he brought European Gothicism to American art as Poe brought it to American literature. For all their astounding and accurate detail and "lifelike" poses, they seem otherworldly, and that is perhaps their greatest achievement.

In a short but compressed critical interpretation of the famous painting of a golden eagle, perhaps Audubon's most complex and curious work, Rhodes powerfully articulates some of the core ideas underlying the art and its relevance to contemporary thinking about the relationship between man and nature.

The interpretation is too complex to summarize here, but Rhodes concludes that through its "graphic and precisely-rendered violence," the painting attempts to "restore meaning" to our experience of the wild by connecting the alien experience of wild animals to our own lives without sentimentalizing them. Audubon's art reflects our contemporary vision of nature with the complex and conflicted attitudes it depicts. He was, inescapably, of his age in his practices and many of his attitudes, but he was prescient in the depth and honesty of his art, in which he thought profoundly about the nature of his quintessentially American experience.

Perhaps Rhodes best sums up Audubon's achievement when, quoting John Locke's aphorism that "In the beginning all the world was America," he concludes, "In *The Birds of America*, Audubon had imagined the world that beginning might have been, a refinement of the actual world he had explored. So also were his birds exceptional specimens, not averages or types."

Following the publication of *The Birds of America* and its critical and financial success (the later, smaller octavo edition of the work earned Audubon almost a million dollars), a string of misfortunes seemed to signal that his remarkable luck had finally run out: the death of both of his beloved young daughters-in-law, intensifying bouts of depression and excessive drinking that may have been brought on partly by a sense that his life's work was finished, a falling out with old friends. He roused himself at age fifty-eight for one final, and remarkable, expedition up the Missouri as far as Montana, before his descent into dementia and his death in 1851. This was followed by the business failures and deaths of his sons in middle age, leaving Lucy to survive both her husband and her children in a cruel return to the penury, loneliness, and reduced circumstances that she had suffered for so long.

Such a sad denouement might seem, in words Audubon used to describe the wanton and impersonal destruction caused by a flooding river, an "awful exemplification of the real course of nature's intentions, that all should and must live and die." Yet despite its many hardships and unhappy finale, there is something finally affirmative about Audubon's deeply American life, something that sprang from what he himself called "a heart as well-disposed as ever to enjoying the situation to come." ♦

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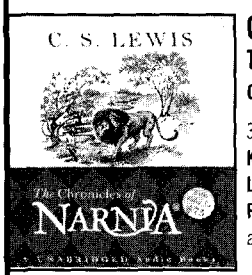

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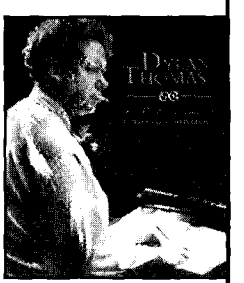

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Parody

Hope Fades for Ohio Win

Cont. from page 1

ty tricks," said Lockhart, emerging empty-handed from the basement of the old Cuyahoga County courthouse, which was condemned decades ago. "There's no limit to how many ballots could have been sent here if the postman got the wrong address."

Mr. Lockhart, who has not slept since Halloween, points out that, at many schools used as polling places, children were permitted to attend class the day after the election. "So there's no telling how many votes could have been lost in that crucial first 96 hours," he says.

But a month after tallies showed Bush winning the state by 135,000 votes, some Democrats are beginning to lose a bit of their confidence that Kerry can turn the tide.

"You've got to remember that, even today, only 99.999999 percent of the ballots have been counted," Paul Begala said on CNN last night. "How many Kerry votes could lurk in that .000001 percent? Republicans ought to be honest—we just don't know."

"It's still too close to call," said Michael Whouley, coordinator of Kerry's get-out-the-vote operation. "There is a guy in Toledo who says he has 11 million votes for Kerry that somehow wound up in his toolshed." If Whouley is right, that would be enough not only to win Ohio for Kerry but also to reverse Bush's 3.5 million-vote margin at the national level, giving Kerry

Standard

DECEMBER 6, 2004

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Things in the strategic sense are ever so slowly looking up. . . . As critics harp about the fighting [in Iraq], a battle-hardened cadre of American veterans has emerged that is liquidating its opponents every day and thus gradually changing politics on the ground. The media have completely missed the story of just how good our combat battalions have become. . . . [Meanwhile,] much of the world will continue to opportunistically and publicly chide us—while privately praying for our success.

—Victor Davis Hanson

Good Schools . . . for the Rich

School choice is already available—unless you're poor.

Middle-class and wealthy families have the means to choose neighborhoods with good public schools or to send their children to private schools. Tens of millions choose where to live because of the quality of schools nearby, something people of lesser means cannot do. . . .

School choice programs in Milwaukee, Florida, and elsewhere have boosted academic performance and expectations for poor students. They have also exerted competitive pressure on public schools to adopt long-overdue reforms. It's a shame that poor schoolchildren must continue to suffer from their lack of school choice—while wealthy Americans who enjoy school choice while opposing it for others fail even to acknowledge their rank hypocrisy.

—Clint Bolick

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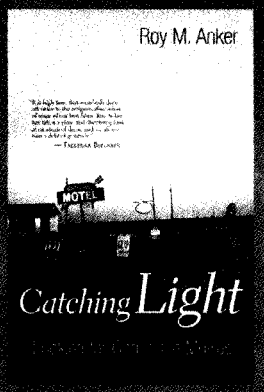

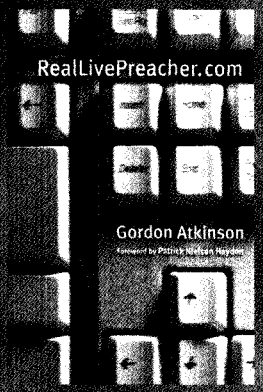

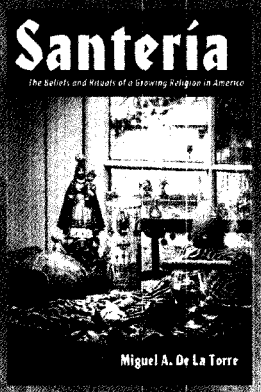

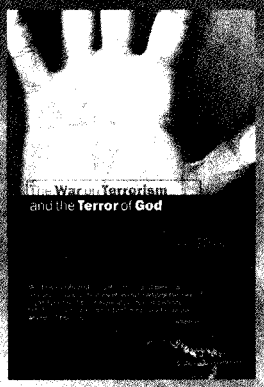

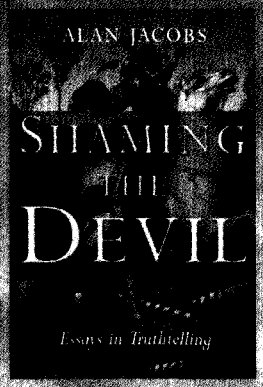

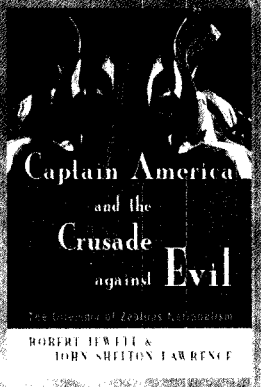

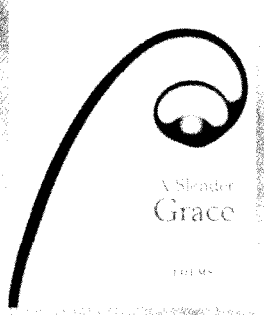

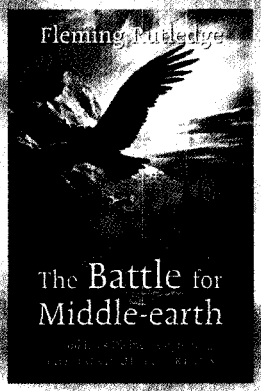

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